

**ANTIMAFIA  
COOPERATIVES:  
LAND, LAW, LABOUR AND  
MORALITIES IN A CHANGING  
SICILY**

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

Goldsmiths College, University of London

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**Theodoros Rakopoulos**

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While this thesis was being written, Europe was undergoing radical transformations. The rhetoric of PIIGS – literally, Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Spain – but an anagram that speaks contempt, 'junk countries', 'the idle South' and similar essentialisations have set off a range of emotional reactions in me that have often hindered the writing process. In the end, developments indicate that there seems to be an understanding that the 'debt' crisis, felt so dearly in my native Greece, the guinea-pig of the

austerity experiment, can hopefully spark different ways to think about ‘the economy’. This conviction has strengthened the writing of this thesis and my sense that there is more to ‘the economy’ than numbers on screens. In this light, the thesis is dedicated to those Greeks who resist a seemingly never-ending crisis and, politically struggling against it, offer an alternative perspective – and hope – for Europeans at large.

## Abstract

This thesis explores the social, political and economic relations constituted in relation to agrarian cooperatives that work land confiscated by the state from *mafiosi* owners in the Alto Belice valley, Sicily. It examines access to resources (work and land), and the cooperatives' division of labour, paying attention to the material changes that the cooperatives (considered in the context of the anti-mafia movement) have brought to people's lives, as well as the tensions regarding social, labour and property relations that emerged from these changes.

The thesis argues that the state's intervention entailed the promotion of values ('legality') and relationships antithetical to those that obtained locally, such as kinship obligations and local reciprocities, as continuities between local workers' moralities, and practices with mafia codes are seen as contradicting the state ideology of radical change.

These tensions are explored in the specificities of the cooperatives' division of labour, which, informed by class, relatedness and locality, pose obstacles to the development of horizontal, equal work relationships. In this context, the thesis explores the contradictions and unintended consequences of the state policy of 'antimafia transformation', creating fissures between the cooperatives' administrators, the local workforce and the wider community.

The thesis provides an ethnographic account of a political project of change that challenged the complex phenomenon of the mafia by radically shifting the conditions of access to material resources. The cooperative project provides alternative values and means of livelihood to those associated with mafia dominance in the area, but largely fails to address the local social arrangements within which the project unfolds. The thesis also addresses debates about horizontal relations in cooperatives, looking at how access to resources (land, labour, reputation) is organised across different moral claims and evaluations, articulated within and outside the cooperatives' framework.

# Table of Contents

<b>DECLARATION .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Acknowledgments .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Chapter 1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>13</b>
1.1. The Research: Divisions of Labour, Moralities, Change.....	13
1.1.1. An encounter and what it implies .....	13
1.1.2. Main questions, aims and contributions of this thesis .....	18
1.1.3. Cooperativism as labour and cooperative divisions of labour.....	21
1.2. Context .....	24
1.2.1. The History of Confiscations and the Formation of the Consortium .....	24
1.2.1. The cooperatives.....	31
1.2.2. The field site and what it represents .....	39
1.3. People and Methods .....	47
1.4. Ethics and Positionality: Informed Consent, Confidentiality, Safety and Reciprocity.....	53
1.5. Thesis Overview (Description of Chapters) .....	58
<b>Chapter 2 Cooperatives, the State, Land, Mafia and Antimafia: Theoretical Debates and Contributions .....</b>	<b>64</b>
Introduction .....	64
2.1. Mafia and Antimafia: Tradition, Change and Livelihoods .....	65
2.2. Cooperatives and Cooperativisms .....	76
2.2.1. Cooperatives and institutions, legal and economic.....	76
2.2.2. Cooperatives and divisions of labour .....	80
2.3. State, Land and Community: From Imagination to Practice .....	88
2.3.1. The unintended consequences of state activity.....	88
2.3.2. Land and property .....	95

## Chapter 3 Modularities and Configurations: The Antimafia

<b>Movement and Struggles over Land and Cooperativism</b> .....	<b>100</b>
Introduction .....	100
3.1. Land and Dissent .....	104
3.1.1. The <i>Casa del Popolo</i> .....	104
3.1.2. Verro and the <i>Fasci</i> movement (1892–1915): the birth of the antimafia?.....	106
3.1.3. Inter- and post-War configurations: Fascism, urban Sicilianism and rural communism .....	109
3.1.4. Revolutionary legality and Portella: post-War law, land and violence .....	113
3.2 Cooperative Wineries and Markets.....	122
3.2.1. The agrarian reform: a shift in class relations (1950s).....	122
3.2.2. ‘ <i>Senz’al</i> ’ brokers and cooperative wineries (1960s) .....	126
3.2.3. The peasant movement: cooperative winery Sancipiriddu.....	128
3.2.4. The Miccis: cooperative winery <i>Fusa</i> .....	134
3.2.5. The contemporary context: land confiscations and antimafia cooperatives .....	136
Conclusion.....	140

## Chapter 4 *Raccomandazioni* and ‘Networking’ in

<b>Recruitment: Different Spheres of Relatedness in the Cooperatives</b> .....	<b>145</b>
Introduction .....	145
4.1. Virtuous Networking: The Administrators .....	148
4.1.1. Networking versus kinship.....	148
4.1.2. Networking as relatedness.....	157
4.2. ‘ <i>Raccomandazioni</i> ’: Antimafia Families among Local Manual Labourers .....	161
4.2.1. Relatedness through <i>raccomandazioni</i> : making ‘antimafia families’.....	162



4.2.2. Changing ideas of kinship through the cooperative experience .....	169
4.3. Horizontalities: Relations between the Teams and Ideas of Patronage.....	176
4.3.1. Clashing idioms: disputes over <i>raccomandazioni</i> and networks.....	176
4.3.2. Two spheres of relatedness, two spheres of cooperative horizontality.....	182
Conclusion.....	185
<b>Chapter 5 Wages as Change, Informalities as Continuity:</b>	
<b>Cooperative Work and Local Livelihoods .....</b>	<b>188</b>
Introduction .....	188
5.1. The Administrators' 'Standardisation' and the Manual Workers' Experience of Work in the Fields .....	191
5.2. Registration of Land to Wives.....	197
5.2.1. The Pitrè and the Riceli families: work, plots, benefits.....	197
5.2.2. Wives as landowners in antimafia families: state, mafia, and local codes .....	206
5.3. 'Mutual Aid': Exchanging Informal Work.....	215
Conclusion.....	229
<b>Chapter 6 The Value of Property and the Values of Ownership: Continuities and Contiguities among Land Plots .....</b>	<b>232</b>
Introduction .....	232
6.1. Categories of Property ( <i>Familiare</i> and <i>Propria</i> ).....	235
6.2. Continuing Practices and Moral Ownership.....	239
6.2.1. Changed property, persisting relationships.....	239
6.2.2. Practices recognising 'moral ownership' over confiscated plots .....	244
6.3. Contiguities with Uncomfortable Neighbours: 'Moral Borders' vs 'Lines of Contact'.....	251

6.4. Problematizing the Relationships Elicited by Categories of Property ( <i>Familiare</i> and <i>Propria</i> ).....	266
Conclusion.....	272
<b>Chapter 7 The Use of Gossip: Blurring and Setting</b>	
<b>Boundaries around the Cooperatives .....</b>	<b>275</b>
Introduction .....	275
7.1. Flows of Rumours about Mafia and Antimafia in San Giovanni.....	278
7.1.1. Learning boundaries: administrators in San Giovanni cafés .....	278
7.1.2. Renegotiating boundaries: Virilia, a storyteller’s story .....	285
7.2. The Instrumentalisation of Gossip.....	291
7.2.1. Contamination: an idiom used to mark boundaries .....	291
7.2.2. The police: setting and blurring boundaries .....	293
7.2.3. Pursuing ‘the clean’: gossip as an antimafia resource .....	297
Conclusion.....	302
<b>Chapter 8 Conclusion .....</b>	<b>303</b>
8.1. A Summary of the Argumentation.....	304
8.2. Different Moral Economies and Values.....	305
8.2.1. Values in cooperatives .....	307
8.3. Kinship, Class and ‘Codes’ in Political Cooperativism.....	308
8.4. Cooperativism as Labour and Neoliberalism: Employment and Informal Work.....	312
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>316</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>351</b>

## List of maps

Map 1: Satellite image of Sicily with the area of Alto Belice indicated.	12
Map 2: Villages of Alto Belice	15

## List of figures

Figure 1.1: General information about the Alto Belice cooperatives	35
Figure 1.2: Pay and membership status in the Alto Belice cooperatives' workforce	36
Figure 1.3: General information about other antimafia cooperatives	37
Figure 4.1: Examples of <i>raccomandazioni</i>	166
Figure 5.1: Sancipiriddu grape prices	201
Figure 5.2: Two families' income	205
Figure 6.1: Map of the plots	239
Figure 6.2: The gendered transmission of <i>familiare</i> property	240
Figure 6.3: The 'right of way' case	251

## List of photos

Photo 1: The view from the balcony of my apartment: <i>via Porta Palermo</i> .	42
Photo 2: Detail of the <i>villetta</i> : a monument.	43
Photo 3: The Billiards café.	44
Photo 4: The entrance to the shared offices of the Falcone and Borsellino cooperatives.	44
Photo 5: The highway.	51
Photo 6: Member-workers and of the Borsellino during lunch break in the vineyards.	102
Photo 7: Two members of the Falcone cooperative in the Cento winery.	102
Photo 8: The entrance to the <i>Casa Del Popolo</i> at Chiana.	102
Photo 9: A banner on a wall of the <i>Casa</i> .	102
Photo 10: The 'stone of Barbato' at the Portella della Ginestra site.	117
Photo 11: Monument to the mafia's victims in San Giovanni.	117
Photo 12: Checco gives a speech to gathered tourists at Portella.	120
Photo 13: A manual worker with his daughter, and an administrator co-host a stand with Falcone products at a fair in Palermo.	147
Photo 14: Workers in the vineyards, applying wire over the vines.	194
Photo 15: Falcone workers about to take a cigarette break in the vineyards.	194
Photo 16: Harvest at Castelo, August 2009.	246
Photo 17: Part of a <i>masseria</i> , a farmhouse that belonged to the Bruscas, now abandoned.	265
Photo 18: The <i>agriturismo</i> building of Falcone.	265





**Map 1:** Satellite image of Sicily with the area of Alto Belice indicated.  
*Source:* Google maps.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1. The Research: Divisions of Labour, Moralities, Change

#### 1.1.1. An encounter and what it implies

It was around 6 o'clock in the morning but we were already late for the fields. I tried to explain to Piero, jokingly, that in English, 'work in the fields' can be verbally associated with 'fieldwork', which is what I was<sup>1</sup> doing there as an anthropologist. He

---

<sup>1</sup> The choice of the past tense or verbs throughout this thesis admittedly takes away some of the charm of the narrative; I recognise the vividness of some classic ethnographers' present tense as a literary device (e.g. Malinowski 2003 [1922]). Although the arguments in support of a 'vivid writing style' for ethnographic writing are engaging (Geertz 2008 [1973]), I am nevertheless also aware of the falsity of the 'eternal present' that this literary style implies. For this reason, I use the past tense throughout the thesis, to mark that the

seemed unimpressed: ‘Is this British humour?’ As we stood looking at the hills on the horizon, kilometres away from the village boundaries, the cobalt blue of the spring skies seemed to intensify with every sip of the coffee, every drag of the cigarette. We were outside the *bar Sangioiannaru*, where most peasants took their morning coffee before setting off for their plots. No other place in San Giovanni was so lively at this time of day – or indeed any time of the day. I counted about 40 people coming and going in the 10 minutes we were there. This was the first month of my stay in the village. I had just met Piero, a member of the Giovanni Falcone cooperative administration. As he was from Palermo, I was interested in seeing how he behaved in the village cafés, not being a local.

We were on our way to Saladino, a 5 hectare (hereafter ha) tract of land that eight years ago belonged to Giovanni Brusca,<sup>2</sup> a local imprisoned *mafioso*; which the state had confiscated and allocated to the Falcone cooperative. Our plan was to arrive at the vineyard at 6 am and spend the day spraying sulphite (a preservative) on the vines. Just as we were about to light up a second cigarette, taking a few more minutes of indulgence, a middle-aged man approached us. Without introducing himself (although he did offer me a lighter), he launched into a long complaint to Piero about the ‘complete mess the coops have made’ in local agricultural work relations. There used to be a genuine local market for agrarian labour that was now going through what he called, with particular emphasis, ‘worrying developments’. Underlining every word he uttered, he pointed at Piero, saying:

You, your cooperatives, are ruining the game here, with your rules and regulations and stuff ... you know, people that have worked for me, in my plots, as they’ve done for ages, all of a sudden ask for more dosh, saying ‘*hey you don’t give enough, and how about those [social security] contributions for a change? Look at the cooperatives, they pay*

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events described should be contextualised in terms of social life in Alto Belice in 2009, in the inter-subjective ways I experienced and came to analyse it.

<sup>2</sup> Brusca was the main mafia figure in San Giovanni during the 1980s and 1990s, notorious in Italy, for his spectacular car bomb assassination of the popular antimafia magistrate Giovanni Falcone in 1992 (not to mention the other 150–200 murders he admitted).

*much more, they pay the social security, I might knock on their door instead.* I've been having this since you antimafia people started your business.<sup>3</sup>

The man left and we got back on the tractor and set off. I was a little perplexed but had an idea about what was going on here – which Piero confirmed: the man was a small-time *mafioso*. But, at the same time, he told me, the man's rant was not untypical of local reactions to, as he put it, 'what the state and the cooperatives have achieved in San Giovanni'. Thus I was presented with a tangible case of reactions to change as channelled through the cooperatives; this was why I was there, doing fieldwork.

This vignette is just one of many episodes illustrating how the coming of the 'antimafia'<sup>4</sup> cooperatives – cooperatives that cultivated land that the state had confiscated from *mafiosi* – brought about a small breakthrough in the agrarian life of San Giovanni,<sup>5</sup> located in the Alto Belice valley of Western Sicily (see Map 2), where I conducted ethnographic fieldwork throughout 2009.

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<sup>3</sup> I use italics for all Italian and Sicilian words or to denote emphasis.

<sup>4</sup> 'Antimafia' is an established term in institutional and grounded life in Italy, adopted by authors as diverse as Jamieson (2000), Schneider and Schneider (2003) and Dickie (2004). I call the agrarian cooperatives that work on land confiscated from the mafia 'antimafia cooperatives', the emic term most often used in the village to describe them. The term in this form implies an ideology of opposing the mafia.

<sup>5</sup> While I have anonymised all names of individuals, toponyms and local associations, this is not the case with widely known organisations that would be in any case easily identifiable in Italy. I have also not anonymised *mafiosi* who have been imprisoned *for life*, like Giovanni Brusca, although I have otherwise changed the names of *mafiosi* (most of whom were released after spending three years, the minimum time for being a member of the mafia, in prison).



**Map 2: Villages of Alto Belice<sup>1</sup>**

*Source: Google maps.*

When local agrarian workers discussed their work conditions with me, they said that mafia patronage had depressed wages for generations. In discussions about access to resources and labour markets, locals suggested that the cooperatives had brought about a relative change in accessing jobs, and also a (minor) shift in ways of thinking about labour – and the mafia. Expressing the aims of the cooperatives, Gianpiero (a 32-year-old man from Palermo), the representative of the Paolo Borsellino cooperative, told me:

I feel that the aim of the coops will be reached when I hear the peasants in the bars talking about trade unionism, not just F.C. Juventus. Our aim is to offer access to the confiscated land, standardise labour rights and change consciences.

Trade unionists told me that the Alto Belice antimafia cooperatives were arguably the first agrarian business in the area that always paid full social security contributions and net pay above 6 euros an hour for agricultural work. The cooperatives' daily workers and member-workers typically earned 51.62 euros a day (net); the cooperatives' administrators had mostly monthly wages, in addition to the full labour social security contribution made

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<sup>1</sup> *Note:* The marked positions are the main villages referred in this thesis. In order to guarantee anonymity, names will not be mentioned; San Giovanni (which would be B) has been deleted.



by the cooperative as their employer. As they employed no more than 90 people (members and short-term contract workers together), this change was minute. Nonetheless the cooperatives symbolically ‘took on’ the local mafia’s labour patronage and were an important contribution to the livelihoods of many local households and individuals. Cooperative workers considered that having a job in the cooperatives established the regularisation of workers’ rights, solidified in ‘legality’, a term they used to denote a positively engaged relationship to law. For cooperative administrators like Gianpiero, the idea of ‘legality’ meant that community wellbeing would improve if all resources were legally regulated and mafia was curbed. Crucially, ‘legality’ entailed the end of informal work.

A radical state-led initiative, the cooperatives are hailed, throughout Italy, as the symbols of the antimafia movement, and its most successful manifestation. Yet, while it unsettled the local labour market in positive ways, the achievements of antimafia cooperativism,<sup>2</sup> also led to contradictions, which are important to grasp in order to engage with the full meaning of antimafia social change in Sicily. A focus on the relationship between continuity and transformation, (the bettering of people’s livelihoods and the incongruities that accompanied it) as well as on how this relationship was reflected in, and drew on, internal divisions of labour within the cooperatives, drive this thesis.

The research explores the social processes of change enacted in the Sicilian village of San Giovanni, and the surrounding area, Alto Belice, through an ethnographic exploration of the activity of four work-based<sup>3</sup> agrarian cooperatives. These organisations

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<sup>2</sup> In the literature, the terms ‘cooperationism’ and ‘cooperatism’ are also used (see for instance Fournier’s biography of Mauss as a ‘co-operator’ (2006: 107–10). I use the term ‘cooperativism’ to denote a set of principles that cooperative members follow: see 2.1.

<sup>3</sup> As discussed later, cooperativism is either producer-based, where autonomous peasants cooperate or worker-based, where people co-own land or cultivate land owned by the state, as in the antimafia cooperatives.

cultivate land plots that the Italian state<sup>4</sup> confiscated from the powerful local mafia between the years 1996–2009, allowing local people direct access to land and work, without the mediation of *mafiosi*. Focusing on this shift of access to resources (labour,<sup>5</sup> land and reputation) offered to the cooperatives' members, and the unintended repercussions this entailed, this dissertation examines a politicised project of cooperativism that aimed to secure people's livelihoods away from mafia's influence.

### **1.1.2. Main questions, aims and contributions of this thesis**

I examine the material changes that the cooperatives have introduced in local livelihoods – as well as the tensions they have brought in their wake. Sicily's historically complex relationship with the state is central: the confiscation of 'mafia' land was intended to curb local *mafiosi* power and promote values of legality and transparency. The thesis explains how this antimafia political intervention informed aspects of cooperative activity but also entailed the promotion of values and relationships that opposed those that some local people, including cooperative members, lived by.

I wish to show how different moralities<sup>6</sup> arose within the cooperatives, presenting the incongruities between the set goals of the project and its development on the ground. Consequently, I also aim to highlight the complex internal differentiations often faced by politicised cooperatives (where the constitution and activity of cooperativism is driven by a political project). These differentiations among members (and related hierarchies) are

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<sup>4</sup> In local discourse the form *lo Stato* ('the State') is established, but my approach required taking a distance from what capitalisation might imply. Taussig (1997) has noted the mystification reflected from writing 'the State' with a capital 'S', a way to denote its 'magic'.

<sup>5</sup> An important strand of the literature in economic anthropology addresses the differences between work and labour: here, I suggest that people have access to *their own* labour but are given access to work through the cooperatives and the state, as discussed later on. This is in line with the current state of play in most of the relevant literature in Europe (Mollona 2009) and elsewhere (Parry 2009) while debates on the differentiations as to 'owning' one's labour stemming come from other anthropological research, such as the Melanesian literature (for instance: Josephides 1986; Strathern 1990).

<sup>6</sup> I use the term to encapsulate people's evaluations of situations as ethically acceptable according to their standards and within their social situatedness; as the ethnography will show, definitions were dynamic and always contextual to people's experience.

equally related to obligations and social networks *outside* the cooperative's framework as they are with activities performed *within* the framework of cooperative work itself.

My analysis is based on ethnographic evidence showing that divisions of labour develop in politicised cooperativism because some cooperative members (are able to) identify with its basic political premises more than others do. Politicised cooperatives, albeit delivering degrees of social change, contain different ideas, practices, and morals – sometimes complementary and others at odds with each other. Antimafia cooperatives' main goal and practice was to offer stable employment, contributing to the bettering of locals' livelihoods. But 'cooperatives', like 'livelihoods', should be examined in terms of the broader social activity of their members, and hence in a framework that includes relationships beyond waged employment within them. Cooperatives, I show, are influenced by values coming from their members' experiences in their broader social milieu including kinship, the informal economy and local codes and idioms), often different from those claimed by their political principles. Some of these relationships, in the case of Alto Belice, are deemed to belong to a problematic 'tradition', which the cooperatives strive, in principle, to supersede. For example, the research shows how kinship relations, seen as highly suspect, (because the loyalties they generate are seen to contradict the ideals of legality and meritocracy), are in fact *constitutive* of cooperatives in practice, giving meanings to the experience of workers' participation in them.

The thesis aims to elucidate how different morals and practices inform divisions of labour within cooperatives and how members experienced these differentiations, asking:

1. What values pull cooperatives together and how do people relate to these values? What contradictions exist between values within and outside the cooperative context?
2. How is cooperativism interacting with relatedness, class and continuities in particular local codes, relationships and practices taking place *outside* a cooperative

framework? In the end, how do tensions between political principle and local values influence divisions of labour in political cooperativism?

The varied moralities stem from members' different allegiances: some adhere to a model of cooperativism guided by state planning and some lean towards local relationships and obligations (including kinship and neighbourhood). The research then elucidates the interaction between local values, codes and practices, and the pursuit of a state-planned, legality-oriented system<sup>7</sup> of value. This interaction informs, as explored elsewhere in Southern Europe (Herzfeld 2003), interesting hierarchies, especially when they compete within the same work organisation.

This work aspires to be the first ethnography of the antimafia movement that pays attention to livelihoods and production processes rather than civil society mobilisation. Examining the consequences of the changes introduced by the antimafia cooperatives in the lives of individuals, families and institutions in Alto Belice, it also explores broader meanings of change and the continuities involved alongside it, in Sicily and beyond.

The thesis shows that cooperatives are internally differentiated organisations whose divisions of labour are not simply the result of exposure to markets, as so often explored in the relevant literature (see the following section) but also the fact that the workforce in the cooperatives studied here are composed of people embedded in different, often

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<sup>7</sup> Anthropological discussion of value overlaps with the bulk of economic anthropology's theoretical explorations, and Graeber's book provides an excellent elaboration of this (2001). Throughout the book, Graeber argues that human actions and artefacts are differently valued within specific contexts but avoids suggesting that such contexts constitute, for example, separate 'domains' (2001: 17–18), or indeed, as is popular in much current anthropology, 'regimes' of value (he criticises the repercussions of Appadurai's (1986) argument as potentially neoliberal (Graeber 2001: 30–31)). In this thesis, when referring to different contextualisations of what people value, I shall use the term *values* to mean 'conceptions of what is ultimately good, proper, or desirable in human life' (Graeber 2001: 1). As the thesis does not examine value theoretically, I opted for the use of a term that carries less weight, in order to focus on how the discussed contextualisations of cooperative members' lives (implying social relations, codes and practices), are entangled with cooperativist economic activity, especially since this activity is endowed with notions and aims of political and cultural change interacting with people's experiences within the cooperatives. In a few cases, I shall use the term 'a system of values', to denote, rather than endorsing a structuralist approach implied in 'system of value' (Graeber 2001: 223–224), the codification of certain concepts in state-regulated and legislated discourse, imposed through the law; (the tension between legislation and local 'systems of values' has been, after all, a long-standing concept in legal theory (Kelsen 2007: 8)).

irreconcilable, social relations and circumstances. In the political context of a project whose lynchpin is legality, it is significant that legal categories do not have meanings or values shared universally. My work therefore provides an account of a radical political project that challenges the mafia but largely fails to grasp the local social arrangements within which it unfolds.

### **1.1.3. Cooperativism as labour and cooperative divisions of labour**

The ethnography follows members of cooperatives in different fields and activities they negotiated *within* and *outside* the cooperatives' framework: recruitment and relatedness, work and livelihoods, land and reputation. This reveals the different, and often contradictory, ideas and practices through which people of the cooperatives approached the resources available to them (land and work), establishing relationships between cooperatives and kinship (Chapter 4), informal income seeking (Chapter 5), social arrangements around land (Chapter 6) and flows of reputation (Chapter 7). A historical backdrop to the local antimafia movement and cooperativism is also provided, to locate the contemporary cooperatives in a history of tense relationships between law, landownership and markets (Chapter 3).

Antimafia cooperatives are distinctive in that they are principally driven by the creation of waged work. This view of cooperativism *as labour* – specifically, as a vector of waged employment – is important, as political cooperativism is often identified with the role of doing away with wage work (see Mauss in Fournier 2006: 125–26). In the absence of regular waged labour in Alto Belice, the cooperatives, enacting the state's antimafia project, set out to provide job opportunities, rather than challenge the capital/labour distinction, as radical cooperatives have historically done in Italy (Meriggi 2005). In other contexts where workers' cooperativism appeared as labour, this was primarily in a salvage role for jobs, helping withstand transformations in labour markets such as neoliberal privatisations (Buechler and Buechler 2002; Bauerkämper 2004), or contributing grassroots means to

retrieve work after crises that dismantled waged employment (Sitrin 2006). In post-Soviet collectives struggling to maintain employment, workers ‘remain locked in the alienated forms of symbolic collectivism inherited from the past, treating the collective as a resource imposed from above’ (Ashwin 1999: 168). Such state interventionism in (and through) collective work has been explored via political projects where the state retained land, in the USSR (Humphrey 1983; 1998), but is rare in the context of a neoliberal market economy, like Italy; in Alto Belice, as explained in the next section, it was part of a political project. Antimafia cooperativism, inspired by legality, aims to instigate a value system over resources (employment and property) that contradicted many local values, forming a process amenable to hierarchisations, as not all members morally and practically identified with it in equal terms.

Rooting divisions of labour in antimafia cooperatives’ subjective members experience entails a differentiation from contexts described in the sociological and anthropological literature. Sociologists underlining internal differentiations in cooperatives (Bartlett 1993) rarely emphasise the role of moralities, codes and social relationships, some assuming a Simmelian perspective, to stress the lack of ‘trust’ (Gambetta 2000; Cook et al. 2007). Drawing on the market’s<sup>8</sup> drive for competitiveness, cooperatives are often prone to ‘restructuring’, diverging from their original equity-orientated organisation of labour. Increasing specialisation (‘to speak the language of the market’) ousts horizontal work relations within them (Checker and Hogeland 2004: 33). Most often, antagonistic markets imposing practices of ‘governance’ (Zamagni and Zamagni 2010: 80) eventually create internal differentiations and hierarchies in cooperatives, in the direction of ‘middle class reforms’ (Kasimir 1996: 63). These shifts denote ruptures informed by neoliberal structural

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<sup>8</sup> I’m taking the term as used by the authors I discuss, who stress free market competitiveness; I do acknowledge we should be careful to not naturalise markets in terms of ‘economics’ discourse; of course, anthropological work speaks to that (Geertz 1978 and 2008; Carrier 1997), presenting ‘other’ aspects of market activity, which diverge from economic rhetoric.

adjustment (Whyte 1999; Gunn 2000) or conservative political ideologies (Narotzky 1997: 120).

The implied idea appears to be that cooperatives operating in a capitalist economy are (increasingly becoming) disembedded from the community; for example, subscribing to market guidance and bureaucratisation (Burawoy 1991; cf. Ferguson, same volume). The anthropological endeavour here is to question the idea that labour divisions are structured in economic terms only, especially in cooperative projects (like antimafia cooperativism, as shown below) that maintain ambiguous views of aspects of local life such as kinship, local codes and ‘tradition’. This way, we can highlight contemporary cooperatives’ ability to adapt to change in volatile ways (Vargas-Cetina 2005). Accounting for new developments, such as cooperatives endorsing projects offering potentials for ‘postcapitalist politics’ (CEC 2001) or ‘community economies’ (Gibson-Graham 2006: 110–27) or formed as indigenous responses to neoliberal transformations (Stephen 2005), requires attention to the values coop members and contractual workers<sup>9</sup> endorse in their lives and livelihoods.

Cooperative organisation in Italian agrarian contexts has been channelled through politics elsewhere, too; Tuscany offers a well-researched case, where the Communist Party encouraged producers to cooperate, already since the 1950s (Pratt 1994: 71). In Sicily, instead, the project of curbing the mafia took the form of a radical state-led economic intervention that created work, distributed land and organised cooperatives. My ethnography tests the limits of the consolidation of these resources in antimafia cooperativism, codified in the categorisation of recruitment as meritocracy (Chapter 4), of work as waged employment (Chapter 5) and of land as property (Chapter 6). The narrative explores how locals’ experience of membership in antimafia cooperatives spilled over other

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<sup>9</sup> I shall be calling the contract workers ‘daily workers’, to distinguish them from the member-workers. Note that most member-workers were paid *daily* themselves; but they were not *daily workers* in that they had contracts of permanent and continuous employment with the cooperatives.

social fields, presenting continuities of cooperative members' activity with local codes and moralities (gossip, registration of land to women, informal work, moral ownership of land). The tension between the legislated and the local denotes the pluralism of economy as different value arenas, different domains of value that interact (Gudeman 2001). What developed among members within the cooperatives, however, rather than struggles over value (Graeber 2001: 115; De Angelis 2007) were clashes of values, registered in diverse social experiences among coop members.

My ethnography shows that this interaction can take place *within* the same cooperative, and stems from the tensions between changes imposed by a political project and continuities of members' morals and practices with local codes the project aims to tackle. In that way, my research argues that divisions of labour to an extent reflect a distinction between state-driven *cooperativism* (a system of value codified in regularisation of resources) and the grounded meanings of experience of partaking in *cooperatives* (whose members follow local values).

## **1.2. Context**

### **1.2.1. The History of Confiscations and the Formation of the Consortium**

Palermo in the 1980s had the highest rates of violent crime among European cities (Sterling 1991; Dickie 2004). The *mafiosi*, coordinated in the vertical structure of Cosa Nostra (Lodato 2001; cf. Tilly 1974), selectively eliminated state bureaucrats, including investigating magistrates, who challenged their aims. The number of the mafia victims, dubbed 'excellent cadavers' (Stille 1996; see also Sant Cassia 2007) included MPs such as Pio La Torre, who had sponsored an anti-mafia law in 1982 (Rizzo 2003) that set up the formation of antimafia confiscations. His assassination that same year indicates just how



important the law he had crafted actually was.<sup>10</sup> The ‘Rognoni–La Torre’ Law (number 646/82, co-proposed with the Christian Democrat MP Virginio Rognoni) made two fundamental amendments to Article 416 of the Italian Criminal Code. It introduced a specific crime of ‘mafia’-related as distinct from ‘organised crime’ and introduced the power of the courts to confiscate the assets of persons belonging to the mafia, as well as that of their relatives, partners, and families who in the past five years before a confiscation had acted as ‘straw persons’.<sup>11</sup>

La Torre’s collaboration with Rognoni also shows the convergence of the two major parties, *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC) and *Partito Comunista Italiano* (PCI)<sup>12</sup> en route to an antimafia political consensus (Lane 2010: 34–36). La Torre belonged to the moderate faction of the PCI. The communists promoted ‘an alliance of democratic forces’ against mafia violence, raising awareness of mafia intimidation of the peasant movement (Rizzo 2003). Interestingly, as a trade unionist, La Torre had been imprisoned for his part in Alto Belice land occupations in 1948, an action aimed in part against mafia power. This shows how state policies on mafia shifted over time (Ginsborg 2003b: 205): by the mid 1990s, in response to intense mafia anti-state violence and civil society pressures, the state took a more active antimafia stance, and the confiscation law was a key intervention in this policy (see 2.1).

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<sup>10</sup> It has been said that ‘the mafia kills in the way a state does; it does not murder, it executes’ (Dickie 2004: 97).

<sup>11</sup> Legally, a ‘straw person’ (*prestanome*) is a person who does not intend to have a genuine beneficial interest in a property but to whom such property is nevertheless conveyed, in order to facilitate a more complicated transaction at law (in this case, retaining the plots’ ownership). In Alto Belice, such people were often victims of mafia intimidation but equally often, were mafia affiliates. The issue of nominal land ownership is complex, as it regards the visibility of *mafiosi* vis-à-vis the state. In terms of criminal procedure, once proved that an asset is directly or indirectly controlled by a *mafioso* it becomes confiscated, despite its nominal status. This is not to be confused, however, with the practice of registering wives as nominal landowners (explored in 5.2) or *mafiosi*’s wives actually owning plots, acquired from inheritance; in that case, the plots are legally glossed as *familiari* and are not confiscated (6.1).

<sup>12</sup> The PCI (Communist Party) became, at the time of La Torre, the largest Western communist party (Shore 1990). The right-wing DC (Christian Democracy) was the historical right wing party of Italy, which single-handedly governed the country from the mid 1940s to the mid 1980s (Ginsborg 2003a: 141-185).

Anthropologists exploring the specific characteristics of Italian communism, have noted that its ‘escape from Leninism’ (Shore 1990) consolidated the party’s hegemonic success in most of the country, but not Sicily (Li Causi 1993; see also 3.1.3). The PCI elaborated and posed the ‘moral issue’ (*la questione morale*) to politics, which was incorporated in contemporary Italian political discourse. Focusing on the transparency of the public sphere, it entailed exposing the role of ambiguous political agents (like the mafia). The principle of ‘*legalità*’, (law plus morality), invoked by left-wing legalistic agendas and endorsed by the antimafia cooperatives, is currently used in ways that emulate and reproduce the ‘moral question’ of the late 1970s (Rakopoulos 2011).

New legal measures were introduced in the early 1990s, when a series of mafia killings had provoked popular contempt for the organisation (Jamieson 2000: 127). The law providing for the ‘social use of assets confiscated by the mafia’ eventually came into effect in 1996 (n. 109/96), passed in response to the activism of the NGO Libera.<sup>13</sup> One million signatures were gathered supporting the demand for ‘the mafia to restitute what was unjustly usurped’ (Libera 2008b).<sup>14</sup> Therefore dubbed ‘a popular initiative legislation’ (Pati 2010), the law introduced a procedure to ensure the ‘social use’ of the confiscated assets (Libera 2010). Once a *mafioso* is convicted, his assets, including property rights, are handed over to the Ministry for Internal Affairs<sup>15</sup>. Having identified the territorial jurisdiction where the assets are located, it passes them to the relevant municipality. In the case of land

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<sup>13</sup> Libera is an ‘umbrella NGO’, the largest in Italy, to which 1,500 organisations adhere (see [www.libera.it](http://www.libera.it)). There is a Libera branch in 50 Italian cities. It caters for ‘the antimafia struggle’, promoting ‘the restitution of land’ (Cooperare 2009) and ‘the eradication of mafias from Italian social life’ (Libera 2009a: 12).

<sup>14</sup> Presenting the views of state institutions and Libera, in order to elucidate the reasoning behind confiscations and cooperatives, I quote from few, selected sources, (as the available material is enormous), including websites, leaflets, posters, booklets, press releases, and conferences papers on ‘the antimafia’ that I followed. I focus on three main sources: a collaborative book of the Ministry of Interior, called ‘*L’uso sociale dei beni confiscati?*’ (The social use of confiscated assets), edited by two key Libera administrators (citation: [Frigerio and Pati]), the website of the Consortium, the state apparatus responsible for the allocation of the assets to cooperatives in Alto Belice, discussed below in this chapter (citation: [Consortio]) as well as its publication ‘Focus’, and finally, Libera’s leaflets, newsletters, the magazine bearing its name and its website ([www.libera.it](http://www.libera.it)) (citation: [Libera: Year], as these unsigned documents represent the NGO at large). All the above are cited as primary sources.

<sup>15</sup> Specifically the National Agency for Assets Seized and Confiscated from Mafia Clans.

this includes ownership, usufruct and adjunct rights. This jural process, as an ‘extraordinary measure’, draws from legal theory of exceptional circumstances.<sup>16</sup>

An example will help clarify this process. Giovanni Genovese (a San Giovanni *mafioso*) owned a vineyard in the territory of Reale (an Alto Belice village), bought to launder drug money in the mid 1980s. The *mafioso* was arrested in 1997; the land plot was confiscated in 1999 and passed into the property of the state; the Reale municipality then transferred its usufruct to an antimafia cooperative, under renewable lease contracts valid for 20 or 30 years. These social agrarian cooperatives<sup>17</sup> fall into the category of appropriate social use as they abide by the principles of Italian cooperativism and are not for profit organisations, protected in the constitution (Article 45). They are supported by the state, and Libera, which says that the land was allocated to the cooperatives ‘as they represented the community’ (Libera 2008a) and founded ‘an economy of legality and solidarity’ (Libera 2009b). Libera pushed for a legality-oriented discourse promoting the antimafia cooperatives.

Despite the cooperative movement’s 150-year-old history (Sapelli 1981), the Italian ‘social cooperatives’ are relatively new. The antimafia cooperatives specifically were created

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<sup>16</sup> When arrested, a person accused of mafia-related crimes is asked to prove the provenance of their assets; this undermines the presumption of innocence in Italian (and generally European) Criminal Law. Under normal criminal procedure, this fundamental democratic principle is undisputable. But here, ‘the realm of mafia is an *exceptio legalis*’, as the Palermitan magistrate Dr Rossio told me. These ideas reflect broader tendencies in legal theory in Italy, and can be seen in the light of Carl Schmitt’s jural theory of the ‘state of exception’, according to which the sovereign is ‘he’ who decides in exceptional situations (2008). Hence the Italian state justifies its toughened criminal procedure (Ingroia 2009) as ‘extraordinary measures’ required to counteract the delegitimisation of the state’s monopoly of violence by the mafia, even incorporating values bordering on being undemocratic and in potential violation of the European Convention on Human Rights Article 6. Current Italian theorists who find kinship with Schmitt’s theorem include Giorgio Agamben (2005): his figure of the *‘homo sacer’*, set inside/outside the conventional realm of the law, in a permanent state of exception, has been dominant in recent social science, impacting on anthropology as well). Schneider and Schneider (2002) also discuss aspects of this problematic of ‘emergency’ in antimafia legislation.

<sup>17</sup> The major differentiation in agrarian cooperatives is between work-based coops, composed of workers, such as the antimafia cooperatives, and production-based coops, whose members are producers (Sapelli 1981). The former are composed of waged members-labourers and are work organisations with shared capital between members; in this case, the usufruct of land. The latter are composed of independent producers who sell their produce to a co-owned winery, which processes and distributes their produce (more on this in Chapter 3, from a historical perspective). In the case of Alto Belice, the *Sancipiriddu* coop-winery catered for 800 producer-members who sold their grapes for vinification and bottling.

in response to the 109/96 law, and use confiscated land plots, machinery and other resources taken from mafia (tractors, harvesters and a winery called Cento<sup>18</sup>) and bestowed on the cooperatives between 1996 and 2006 to be ‘restituted back into productivity’ (Frigerio and Pati 2007: 3; Pati 2005). In 2012, there were eight such cooperatives in Italy (see Figure 1.3), cultivating land hailed as ‘liberated’ or ‘emancipated’ and presented as the result of grassroots mobilisations with state backing (Procino 2003). The fact that four of those eight cooperatives were located in the Alto Belice area of Western Sicily made that the ideal site to study ‘antimafia change’. Libera and many journalists alike claimed the area had been ‘liberated from the mafia’ and was an example for communities across Southern Italy (Morelli 2003; Libera 2006: 2).

After the mid 1990s, when the relationship between state and Cosa Nostra shifted from connivance to conflict, triggered by an escalation of mafia violence, the jailing of numerous Alto Belice *mafiosi* between 1996 and 2000 (12 clan leaders in San Giovanni alone) multiplied the number of landed properties in the hands of local municipalities. Mayors pushed for the formation of a specialist bureaucratic apparatus to administer the transfers of usufruct rights to local cooperatives, guarantee the ‘social use’ and ‘associated’ use of the land and promote the cooperatives’ activity at large.

The mayors of five Alto Belice villages welcomed the creation of the Consortium ‘Development and Legality’<sup>19</sup> (*Consorzio ‘Sviluppo e Legalità’*) in May 2000, which to this day oversees the cooperatives’ activity, ‘to administer the assets in associated use and for a social goal’ (Focus 2001: 1). Tasked with the transfer of confiscated land and other assets

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<sup>18</sup> The means of production, (land and machinery) of the antimafia cooperatives are owned by the state: this also refers to the *Cento* confiscated winery where vinification and bottling takes place. Part of the funding for the renovation of the *Cento* came from the European Union’s PON-5 programme, to assist development and security against illegality. The cooperatives retain the total control of the use-value (legally: usufruct) of the assets nevertheless.

<sup>19</sup> The guiding principles of the cooperatives, therefore, were these interconnected notions; as Luca, the president of Falcone, told me, ‘There is no development without legality and no legality without development; this is our mission here, to enact both’.

‘from the clans to the state and the community’ (Focus 2001: 12; Candito 2012), the Consortium imposed a model of antimafia cooperativism characterised by the pursuit of legality and values endorsed in legislation (‘work’, ‘property’), especially regarding the regulation of land and labour.

The Consortium, whose seat is in the San Giovanni municipality, has two branches: in one, led by the local mayors, personnel may change through the municipal elections that take place every four years. The other branch is a permanent team of four bureaucrats appointed by the Ministry of the Interior. The managing directorship of the Consortium is a permanent position chaired by a Palermitan lawyer, Matteo, who has a PhD in law. When I first asked him his views on the confiscations, he told me they were due to ‘a state of permanent legal emergency with mafia issues in our country’. The Consortium’s presidency rotates every year among the eight mayors. The municipalities that originally participated in 2000 were Curriuni, Reale, Chiana, San Cipiriddu, and San Giovanni. Three more villages joined three years later: Rocca, Fonte, and Principe. The Consortium<sup>20</sup> was promoted by the centre-left Prefect of the Palermo province of the time, as well as by the leftist mayors of San Giovanni and Curriuni. The NGO Libera has played a key role: despite not having any administrative powers itself (not being a state organisation), the Consortium has delegated to the NGO full responsibility for the representation and marketing of the cooperatives, in what Matteo described to me as ‘a joint venture of state and civil society against the mafia’. The NGO Arci<sup>21</sup> also assisted in this, catering for the Lavoro e Altro cooperative, the most openly left-wing among the four I examined.

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<sup>20</sup> See Appendix 1 for more details on its structure.

<sup>21</sup> Arci, an openly leftist association, is the largest politicised association in Italy. The cooperative Lavoro e Altro was intricately linked with the Arci branch of Palermo, which was particularly active in the ‘antimafia struggle’, as well as in issues of anti-racism, anti-sexism and environmental activism. Arci was openly critical of Libera’s non-political view of the antimafia movement.

It is important to emphasize the local character of the restitution process. The cooperatives studied here cultivate land that had been confiscated from significant Alto Belice *mafiosi*.<sup>22</sup> The Lavoro e Altro was located in Curriuni, while the three others (Falcone, Borsellino and the much smaller Liberaanima<sup>23</sup>) were in San Giovanni. Collectively, the land tracts these cooperatives managed amounted to almost 600 Ha; they include mainly organic vineyards and cereal farms (Libera 2009a; Consorzio 2010). The cooperatives also had the usufruct of two beautiful Alto Belice 19<sup>th</sup> century *masserie* (farm houses), both confiscated from Giovanni Brusca, and turned into agricultural tourism establishments (*agriturismo*). The fact that the majority of confiscations in Italy took part in the cradle of Cosa Nostra was highly symbolic.<sup>24</sup>

The rhetoric of this redistribution of assets used by official agencies such as the Consortium, presents a just state actively intervening to restore to an (idealised) community what has been ‘stolen’ from it. State documents explaining ‘whither to confiscate’ (*Focus* 2001) resemble a Marxist analysis of primitive accumulation.<sup>25</sup> These documents present *mafiosi* as having ‘usurped’ the agricultural land from what was allegedly in the common domain, available to all (Consorzio 2010). Land was allocated to the cooperatives ‘as they represented the community’ (Libera 2008c) and had founded (to promote) ‘an economy of legality and solidarity’ (Libera 2009b). In fact (see 3.1.3 and 3.1.4), there had been only one, short-lived historical case of collectively owned land in Alto Belice, in 1946 peasant land occupations. The confiscated land, as the state apparatuses and the NGO claim (in texts

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<sup>22</sup> Totò Riina and Giovanni Brusca, today imprisoned for life, controlled Cosa Nostra’s heroin trafficking in the 1980s and 1990s, when Sicilians controlled the largest share of the world’s circulation of the drug (Camilleri and Lodato 2002). Giovanni Brusca lived almost all his life in San Giovanni. His nicknames speak for his fierce activity: ‘*u verru*’ (the pig) and ‘*u scanacristianu*’ (the strangler).

<sup>23</sup> The Falcone, Borsellino and Liberaanima cooperatives were guided by Libera’s Palermo. There were Libera members in the administration teams of both cooperatives.

<sup>24</sup> See Appendix 7 for a map of confiscated assets in Italy.

<sup>25</sup> Marx’s ideas on primitive accumulation are enlightening in terms of his critique of property in *Capital* (vol 1, VIII, chapter 26; 2008: 363-366) as a hub of historical social relations obscuring processes of violence: state or private force. Arlacchi argues extensively on the theme of ‘mafia primitive capital accumulation’ (Arlacchi 1986; Cacciola 1984).

co-authored by their representatives) symbolises ‘a resource for the area, an opportunity for development and civil growth’ (Frigerio and Pati 2007: 5). Following this line of argument, they envision newly created cooperatives as horizontal work organisations (all members being equal in pay and work tasks) to ‘democratically accommodate the land that returned to the community, after the mafia had unlawfully usurped it’ (Frigerio and Pati 2007: 37) and to guarantee the ‘community’s participation in the social use of the confiscated assets’ (Frigerio and Pati 2007: 67; Libera 2008b). The state confiscations project is still ongoing at the time of writing of this thesis, 16 years after its inception.

### **1.2.1. The cooperatives**

The first land plot to be restituted, i.e. allocated to a social cooperative, was a vineyard in Corleone, of Totò ‘The Beast’ Riina, confiscated in 1999, and bestowed on the Lavoro e Altro cooperative. (As mentioned, the municipalities retain legal ownership of the confiscated assets, and the cooperatives only hold the usufruct). The Consortium promoted the idea of ‘more cooperatives’ to accommodate all the land that had been ‘restituted to the community’ since its inception in 2000. Two local cooperatives, Akragas and Paradiso, set up in 1998 before the Consortium existed, had been shut down in 2002 (see 4.2). Promoted by Libera and the Consortium, public competitions were held in 2001 and 2006, for the formation of two more cooperatives in the Alto Belice area. Establishing the cooperatives was advertised as ‘the possibility to restore back to the community the land that *mafiosi* usurped from it’ (Focus 2001). Driven by an ideology of communalism and ‘justice’, a key element was replacing the mafia as patron by ‘reconstituting the presence of the state in the area’ (Libera 2006). Speaking about the public competitions for recruitment in the cooperatives, Matteo emphasised to me a phrase of Alberto Dalla Chiesa,<sup>26</sup> which

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<sup>26</sup> General Alberto Dalla Chiesa had been the head of Sicily’s *Carabinieri* (the military police, one of the three police forces of Italy, and active in hunting *mafiosi*). Dalla Chiesa was assassinated in Palermo in 1982, only 100 days after he had taken office; his legacy is still debated in Italy, partly because he had played a key role in curbing the Red Brigades in the North, when he served as *Carabiniere* General in Torino, yet failed to crush

had become a mantra of antimafia cooperativism: ‘the state gives as a right what the mafia offers as a gift.’

The public competitions resulted in the hiring of the core workforce and the establishment of the cooperatives I have studied most closely: the Giovanni Falcone (2001) and the Paolo Borsellino (2006)<sup>27</sup>. The 15 original members of each were selected by the Consortium and Libera. The positions were publicly advertised and the meritocracy-oriented selection process involved detailed scrutiny of the applicants’ abilities, antimafia commitment, kinship connections and social contacts. The cooperatives were not allowed to employ anyone who had any *mafioso* in their ‘social circle’, including kin (up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> degree, inclusive), friends and affines (Bando 2001). Most of my informants were therefore either people selected in that process or others who joined later, replacing members who had left; they were recruited through connections they had among the existing cooperative workforce. In addition, there were workers on short-term contracts of seasonal employment, paid by the day (‘daily workers’). By 2009, the number of people making a living through these two cooperatives was double the original 30.

There were two types of cooperative members: administrators and manual workers. The difference between members and other (‘daily’) workers were, firstly, contracts, in that members had permanent contracts, although there were important distinctions between administrator-members and worker-members concerning levels of remuneration and timing of payment, as well as periods of actual work. While administrator-members enjoyed permanent and continuous contracts, the member-workers were given contracts that were permanent but only covered work during the agricultural season. Only three worker-

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Cosa Nostra (N. Dalla Chiesa 2007; Stille 1995: 61). Dalla Chiesa is revered by people in the antimafia cooperatives, who often quote him.

<sup>27</sup> Giovanni Falcone was the magistrate–antimafia expert who prosecuted Cosa Nostra for a decade until the Alto Belice mafia executed him in 1992. Paolo Borsellino died in a mafia-caused explosion 100 days later. For general information on the Falcone, Borsellino and also the Lavoro e Altro cooperative, and their balances for the year 2008, see Appendices 4 and 5.



members had a monthly wage, most being paid on a daily basis. The second key feature marking out members was democratic participation, since all members sat on the Members' Assembly, which met annually. By contrast, non-member-workers signed three-month contracts for seasonal agrarian work, paid on a daily basis, and had no rights to democratic participation. (To distinguish them, as and where appropriate, from the worker-members I shall use the terms 'daily workers' or '*braccianti*'.)

However, the member/non-member distinction is misleading. On the one hand, worker-members and on-members had much in common despite the undeniably significant difference between stable employment and short-term contractual work. Manual members' work (and hence pay) was as seasonal as that of most daily workers. Due to their similar pay, work and living conditions the situation of the daily workers was to some extent comparable to the permanent worker-members, with whom they identified, given that they also considered themselves to be 'parts of the cooperative' (see Figure 1.1).

On the other hand, as the thesis explores in depth, there were crucial differences *among members*, between the administrative and worker-members. In that respect, diverging from a marked tendency in anthropology of work to distinguish between workers in stable employment and contractual workers,<sup>28</sup> I focus on stratification *within* the category of those in stable employment separating administrators from worker-members, not least because the latter tended to be allied with daily workers<sup>29</sup>. The two-tiered organisation of all Alto Belice cooperatives (which, in turn, established a pattern followed by antimafia cooperatives elsewhere, outside Sicily) is a salient issue, with repercussions in terms of

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<sup>28</sup> Of course, this is an older discussion, often highlighting gendered stratifications (for example: Goddard 1996). Recent anthropological research on industrial settings (Parry 2007; Sanchez: 2010) where there is a consistent divide between fixed and (sub)contracted workers takes the discussion further. The line of argument is that those in stable employment, unlike contractual workers, are privileged ('embourgeois', as Parry has it) by comparison. The debate on precariousness and genealogical differences among workers is also akin to this discussion (Procoli 2004; Standing 2011).

<sup>29</sup> This is why, for most of the thesis, the term 'manual workforce' or 'workers' means both daily and member-workers, unless stated. I do appreciate that, legally, administrators were cooperative workers, too. However, the teams identified themselves as 'administrators' and 'workers' respectively.

class, and the overall meaning of participation in antimafia cooperativism. Much can be said in terms of the industrial democracy (Holmström 1989) of the antimafia cooperatives; however, as the mechanics of voting and ‘collective’ decision-making were not often disputed in the field, and as I hope to show that internal stratifications go well beyond systems of voting, I shall not dwell on this theme in my ethnographic narrative.

In fact, the argument I propose is as follows: although bereft of voting rights in the cooperatives, the shared conditions and values of daily workers and worker-members meant that they had similar experiences (and status). In addition, worker-members carried the burden of sharing potential losses incurred by the cooperative. The lack of ‘voice’ in the coops of the non-members, was less significant in marking broad stratification than the issue of livelihoods. In fact, it is part of my argument that, in order to understand the internal divisions within the cooperatives, we need to move methodologically and analytically, beyond a focus on schemes of decision-making, not least because, as the relevant literature notes, they have been appropriated by and as techniques of ‘governance’ (Zamagni and Zamagni 2010). It is telling data, nonetheless, to juxtapose with cooperatives’ ‘participatory democracy’ the fact that the Falcone, Borsellino and Lavoro E Altro all had a similar mode of collective management whereby the ideas of the administration teams dictated the overall planning.

In all three, this was arranged in two decision-making bodies: the Administration Council, meeting monthly, and the Members’ Assembly, meeting annually, where all members had a vote. I observed Administration Council meetings in the three coops. In the three coops’ assemblies I followed in 2009, all decisions by the Councils were approved with a 100% majority, including the Councils’ annual planning and previous year’s accounts (*bilancio*). The Assembly also elected the members for the next year’s Council, always reflecting the views of the Consortium and Libera in electing a majority of administration members over worker-members (for each cooperative, three administration members and

two worker-members were selected). As for the significance of the Members' Assemblies as a form of 'democratic participation' and control, suffice it to quote the opinion of Mina, Falcone's vice-president, which she confided to me just after one of the coop's annual Assembly meetings: 'Well yes, the Assembly is important, but too much democracy can be a waste of time when deciding things corporate; we need organization and quick decisions.'

While highly suggestive, this phrase on its own cannot provide the necessary nuances of what the administrator/worker division of labour in politically driven cooperativism really meant for the lives and livelihoods of worker-members. Where collective decision-making falls short of 'industrial democracy' (Holmström 1989), this is the *outcome* rather than the reason for internal stratifications. The reasons, I shall show, lay mostly *outside* the cooperative framework, in the backgrounds of the members, the broader social relationships in which they were embedded, and how these related differentially to the political project guiding the coops. For this reason, I examine disagreements, splits and conflicts in the workplace and beyond, as indicative of opinions challenging the legality-oriented ideology of the cooperatives that were never expressed in the democratic bodies of the organisations, at least not during my fieldwork.

Figure 1.1

General information about the Alto Belice cooperatives

Name	Location	Land	Other assets	Organisational affiliation	Established
Lavoro e altro	Curriuni	130 ha in Alto Belice (of which 14 ha is vineyards) 19 ha in Canicattí (100 km away)	An agrotourism establishment opened in 2010	Arci	May 1999
Liberanima	Partinico Legal seat: San Giovanni	3 ha of lemon groves	—	Libera	July 2007
Borsellino	San Giovanni	130 ha in Alto Belice (32 of which is vineyards) 20 ha in Casteltermini (110 km away).	An agrotourism establishment opened in 2010	Libera	June 2006
Falcone <sup>35</sup>	San Giovanni	155 ha (30 of which is vineyards). 50 ha from the municipalities of Trapani and Paceco (100 km away).	A winery (Cento). An agrotourism establishment opened in 2006.	Libera	June 2001

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<sup>35</sup> See Appendix 6 for information on its production, assets, capital and profit (the coop's balance approved by the Assembly in 2009).

Figure 1.2

Pay and membership status in the Alto Belice cooperatives' workforce

Name	Cooperative members <sup>36</sup>		Contractual ('daily') workers	
	Administrative workforce	Manual workforce	Administrative workforce	Manual workforce
<b>Liberanima</b>	2 members (on monthly wage of c.500€ <sup>37</sup> )	3 members (on daily pay of 51.62 €net)	—	1 seasonal worker (man)
<b>Borsellino</b>	5 administrators on monthly wage ranging from 1200€ [Salvo, president] to 940€ [Niko, administrator]	12 members (all of them on daily pay)	—	4 seasonal workers (men)
<b>Falcone</b>	7 office-based administrators on monthly wage ranging from 1230€ [Luca, president] to 1030€ [Manlio, administrator]	10 member-workers 4 of them on monthly-wage contracts of c. 1000€ , 6 on contracts based on daily pay	2 office-based administrators, on annual renewable contracts	11 seasonal workers, cooperative members as fieldhands (men, on daily pay contracts); some amassing a monthly 700€  4 seasonal workers (men) in other capacities, e.g. tourism  5 seasonal workers (women)
<b>Lavoro e altro</b>	3 administrators (on monthly wages ranging from 1100€ [Vito, president] to 800€ [Mario, administrator])	12 member-workers	—	4 seasonal workers (men)

<sup>36</sup> Note: All members were on permanent contracts. All figures denote mixed pay.

<sup>37</sup> The issue of pay is not organized in thoroughly consistent data presentation here; the reason is that, hard as I tried, I was not allowed to inspect all different contracts the cooperatives had with members/daily workers and relied mostly on people's own statements.

Figure 1.3

General information about other antimafia cooperatives

Cooperatives outside Alto Belice					
Name	Location	Land	Affiliation	Members	Established
Il Gabbiano	Rome	30 ha (mainly vineyards)	Independent	3	2008
Le Terre di don Peppe Diana	Caserta area (Campania)	No land – buffalos for mozzarella production	Libera	7	2009
Casa dei Giovani	Bagheria	c100 ha (dry farming)	Used to collaborate with Libera <sup>38</sup> but now independent	9	2001
Valle del Marro	Gioia Tauro [Calabria]	60 ha (mainly vineyards)	Libera	10	2008
Beppe Montana	Catania area of Eastern Sicily	2000 orange trees 100 olive trees	Libera (and Etna Consortium for Legality and Development)	4	2011
Defunct Cooperatives in Alto Belice					
Akragas	San Giovanni	130 ha (mainly vineyards)	Preceded Libera and the Consortium	4	Established 1998. Liquidated by the Consortium in 2002.
Paradiso	San Giovanni	130 ha (mainly vineyards)	Preceded Libera and the Consortium	5	Established 1998. Liquidated by the Consortium in 2002.

<sup>38</sup> The Consortium and Libera's imposition of a regularisation of labour did not work in the case of Casa Dei Giovani, as the administrators paid no national insurance contributions to the workers. This caused a scandal, which is still, at the time of writing, under investigation. Meanwhile, the Casa is isolated by other cooperatives, the state and Libera.

### **1.2.2. The field site and what it represents**

San Giovanni was thus the ideal site for fieldwork: the most successful project of confiscation and redistribution of mafia land in Italy had taken place there. It was also, as mentioned, the birthplace of Giovanni Brusca, and still has a reputation for being one of the most mafia-influenced villages in Italy.<sup>39</sup> In a widely discussed and overquoted article, published right after Brusca's arrest, a leading antimafia journalist called San Giovanni 'the village of the 800 Bruscas' (Fava 1996), meaning that Giovanni 'The Pig' Brusca, a *mafioso* who, by his own account, had killed 'around 150 to 200 people' (Lodato 2006: 3), was the tip of the iceberg in a sea of social consensus and kinship links: the 'tradition' of San Giovanni was mafia connivance. 'It is not easy to construct normality in a village bloodied up by hatred,' claimed another article (Corrado 1997). Later, the same newspaper, *Corriere della Sera*, conducted a survey, in which allegedly 60% of *sangiovannari*<sup>40</sup> said the mafia was 'a great thing' (Mignosi 1999).

That San Giovanni – a place with such heavily charged history – was targeted for 'antimafia change' obviously had considerable symbolic weight. The subsequent portrayal of how the 'village of the 800 Bruscas', virtually the epitome of mafia consensus, converted to become a village of 'antimafia heathen', as Libera claimed, was salient– especially given the cooperatives' recruitment policy for locals of excluding anyone who had even remote kinship, affinity or friendship links to mafia.

Regarding this idea of tradition, this thesis makes a contribution informed by ethnographic specificities unique to Sicily, precisely due to the presence of the mafia in the island, often linked to local traditions and popular imagination (Breschi 1986). The mafia 'tradition' is seen as an obstacle to progress (Centorrino et al. 1999; Paoli 2003) cooperation

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<sup>39</sup> As mentioned earlier, in 1992, Brusca killed Giovanni Falcone, amongst other 150–200 people,. In 1995, he also strangled and melted in acid Giovanni Di Matteo, a 13-year-old child, the son of a rival *mafioso* (Lodato 1999). These atrocities gave the place its bad reputation. For a genealogy of the Brusca 'clan', see Appendix 3.

<sup>40</sup> This colloquial word is the demonym used for people from San Giovanni.

and civic trust (Gambetta 1996; 2008), an upkeeper of familism, which dissolves civil society (Putnam 1993; Jamieson 2000; Gunnarson 2008; see also 2.1). Many ethnographies focus on relations of continuity and change, owing to Anthropology's past fascination with culture, and/or social structure, as its starting point. What is interesting from an anthropological perspective is that Alto Belice, and specifically San Giovanni, are cases where tradition is considered decidedly problematic.

Often, in situations anthropologists study, tradition is either treasured and change is seen as desirable in some ways but disruptive (of culture and social structure) or the anthropologist insists that traditions being abandoned have some value. In the case of a place where tradition is so deeply associated with violence and criminality this becomes almost impossible and actually creates a very unusual situation ethnographically (see Taussig 2005, although in Sicily violence was not salient anymore<sup>41</sup>). Yet, as I mentioned, since the mafia is 'cultural' or 'social structural' in certain received ethnographic senses, taking down 'its' *economic* power provoked a series of interesting implications that not only dispute a political economy framework, but also challenge received ethnographic sensibilities regarding tradition.

This is also true for lay perceptions of the mafia phenomenon, in my experience. Since I returned from the field, people I described my work to asked me whether the mafia was still strong in Sicily. People's interest revolved around a *thematic core*, the island being the *locus classicus* of mafia, the 'heart' of the mafia tradition (Lane 2010). Not surprisingly, the film industry informed most people's views: many inquired whether I was a mafia movie enthusiast or how close to movies' depictions of 'the mafia' were to reality'. When I explained to acquaintances in London (including Italians) that my research was on 'the

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<sup>41</sup> While I was in the field, in 2009, two assassinations took place; the responsible, Peppe 'The Buffalo' Brusca, a 78 year old man, was arrested. In the same year, in the neighbouring Consortium village Fonte, Domenico 'the vet' Raccuglia, one of the five most important fugitives of Italy was arrested in his native village (Fagone 2009).



antimafia', not the mafia, most reacted with mixed feelings of disappointment and enthusiasm. For many, this sounded more intriguing than the mafia itself, connoting heroism and commitment for the people involved. Interestingly, gendered frameworks often informed these discussions. Many assumed that antimafia activists were 'brave men' and asked me about how successful 'the antimafia' had been. However, rather than uncritically accepting the claim that 'antimafia' equals 'change', I examine how activities of people involved in the cooperatives transform meanings of land, labour and discourse, while at the same time reproduce established practices and allow for continuations with past relationships.

My research took place throughout the whole of 2009. A pre-doctoral research stay in Sicily lasted six months, from January to July 2007, throughout which I sought a locus to research 'antimafia social transformation'. Confiscations appeared as the only case where an initiative against the mafia had produced changes in Sicilians' livelihoods and antimafia activism yielded income. Having interviewed journalists, judges, police officers, and NGO activists, it seemed to me that mobilisation around antimafia initiatives was manifested as a 'sense of civic duty'. Different research interlocutors<sup>42</sup> answered both 'why take action against the mafia?' and 'what changes has opposing the mafia instigated to your life?' by stating 'being a good citizen'.<sup>43</sup> Most thought an 'antimafia San Giovanni' was a laughable image, due precisely to the village's reputation as a 'traditionally mafia' place; it was for this reason that San Giovanni cooperatives appeared as the ideal site for participant observation around people actively contesting the mafia while making a living, made more sense.

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<sup>42</sup> I shall use the terms 'informants', 'interlocutors' and 'research participants' interchangeably. My preferred term is the latter but it was not applicable in all instances.

<sup>43</sup> Di Maggio (2009) traces this through organised questionnaires, using categories such as 'antimafia commitment', 'liberation', 'change', etc, in order to map what motivated people to apply for a job in the cooperatives.

San Giovanni was hailed by Libera agents I spoke to, as a village whose land was ‘liberated from the mafia’, an idea also promoted by the Consortium (Consortio 2012). During harvest, volunteers from Northern Italy visited San Giovanni, through Libera-organised summer camps to help the cooperatives with agricultural work; this public image the place had acquired made it all the more appealing. After I visited the village a few times and contacted people from the cooperatives, I decided to move to San Giovanni. Although many cooperative members (the administrators) hailed from Palermo and lived in the city, commuting 31 kilometres to San Giovanni to work, it was in San Giovanni where mass confiscations of mafia leaders’ landed property had taken place and where the seat of the Consortium was located.

I asked Checco, the Falcone cooperative’s ‘PR’, to help me move to the village. He explained that several journalists from Italy and abroad had visited the village to write about the antimafia experience there<sup>44</sup>. A journalist himself, he admitted he could not understand why I had to spend a year there to get a grasp of the situation. Nevertheless, he introduced me to *signor* Pippo Pitrè, a 58-year-old day worker from the Falcone, and ex-member of the Borsellino cooperative, asking him to help me out. I soon took up a permanent residence in the village, in Pippo’s empty apartment, paying him rent, who became a key informant. He and his family had moved to another house, 2 kilometres outside the village, in 2007.

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<sup>44</sup> During fieldwork I witnessed visits from journalists across the board and around the world, who wanted to take interviews from antimafia cooperative members: the Italian National Geographic, a glossy magazine from Germany, the Guardian, and even a culinary review from Japan. Titles they came about describing the case included words such as ‘revolution’, ‘heroes’, ‘change’. Some reporters expressed distress, as the Daily Telegraph’s envoy: ‘... it was heart warming to see this brave soul so commemorated, but as we wandered the vines and [Checco] spoke of ‘localism’ and the measures necessary to prevent the Mafia themselves penetrating the committees set up to manage the confiscated land, I couldn’t help partaking of that fatalism which so many have seen as intrinsic to the Sicilian character...’ (Self 2009). *The Guardian* underlines continuities in the antimafia movement: ‘The estate is run by the Borsellino co-operative... “So many courageous men lost their lives in the fight against Cosa Nostra,” said [Checco] as we walked through the fields.” “Now, we, the new generation, are finally able to finish the work that they so bravely began” (Rafanelli 2008).



**Photo 1:**<sup>45</sup> The view from the balcony of my apartment: *via Porta Palermo*.

The official population of San Giovanni is 8,349 people (ISTAT 2011), although most locals insisted that the number of permanent residents was 4,000 at best. The village was founded as San Giovanni dei Mortilli at the foot of the Mato hill in 1779, built according to the needs of a system of land tenure (latifundism<sup>46</sup>), hosting the largest number of people in the smallest possible space. Anthropologists have described the inland Sicilian ‘agrotown’ as a technology of densely populated settlement that reflected the needs of the latifundist system (Schneider and Schneider 1976: 34; Blok 1974: 47). Blok argues these ‘peasant agglomerations’ are characteristic of Southern Italy generally (2000: 136–54; 1969). Interestingly, San Giovanni’s history was born out of a confiscation: the valley’s *fendi* belonged to the Jesuit College of Trapani (Belli 1934) (their names still demarcate land territories today: Dammusi, Mortilli, Signora). In 1776, the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies ordered the expulsion of the Jesuits, and the Marquis of Sambuca, a member of the Sicilian nobility, acquired their land (Comune di San Giuseppe Jato 2008). He was issued a license to build a settlement for the agrarian workforce of his latifundio. The nobleman’s

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<sup>45</sup> All photos, unless otherwise stated, are by the author.

<sup>46</sup> Latifundism, a capitalist type of estate-based agrarian political economy (Schneider and Schneider 1976: 7; see also Petruszewicz 1996).

settlement attracted *braccianti*<sup>47</sup> (agrarian workers) from neighbouring villages; the site's position on a route to Palermo led to its rapid development (Comune 2009). In 1820, the village population was more than 5,000. A part of the hill collapsed in 1838, giving rise to the adjunct village of San Cipiriddu (today's population: 5,016, (ISTAT 2011)), built to house San Giovanni's homeless population.

Locals called San Giovanni '*un paese*', a village. There were hardly any public spaces; the *villetta*, however, a widening of the vibrant Palermo road (*via Palermo*), formed an unofficial square; its five *bar* (cafés) were packed with teenagers on weekend evenings. The building where I lived was well situated in the thick of things, close to the *villetta*. Opposite the apartment was the Billiards café, which, I soon noticed, was popular with *mafiosi*. The balcony looked out onto a panorama of the Mato valley: vineyards as far as the eye could see. The size of the apartment was inconvenient (200 square metres, when I only used a couple of rooms) but, as it was very close to the village centre and the cooperatives' offices, I found it ideal from the start.



**Photo 2:** Detail of the *villetta*: a monument.



**Photo 3:** The Billiards café, close to my home. See 7.1.2 for a narrative about its role as a local mafia meeting place.

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<sup>47</sup> The term, in the Sicilian context, denotes agrarian proletarians (Schneider and Schneider 1976), people whose only means of livelihood were their *braccia*, their arms. The cooperatives' daily workers called themselves *braccianti*. It is a widely used term in Sicily, akin to the *bracero* notion (Kearney 2004).



**Photo 4:** The entrance to the shared offices of the Falcone and Borsellino cooperatives. Notice the humble buildings; the red door is a warehouse; the cooperatives' offices were on the first floor; notice the red banner welcoming the 'E!state liberi' of volunteer labourers in the confiscated fields. The banner made the offices quite conspicuous, unlike most of the year.



**Photo 5:** The highway, with San Giovanni on the right; above the village, notice the Mato hill.

The Falcone and Borsellino antimafia cooperatives shared the same offices; after Calatrasi (the giant winemaker of the area), they were the most widely advertised enterprises of the village. Yet, their offices were difficult to find. On *via* Palermo westwards towards the *bar Cerniglia*, located at the edge of the village, the cooperatives' offices are ungracefully located behind a petrol station. This was where the cooperative administrators worked, mostly young Palermitans. They were unimpressed by San Giovanni. Overlooking the Mato valley, its panoramas were charming but cooperative members commuting from Palermo felt the village itself was dreadful. Every morning they had to travel the 31 kilometres from Palermo along a highway they described as a dire construction, financed by a 1980s money-laundering scheme for the profits of international heroin trafficking in which San Giovanni *mafiosi* were central players.

Cooperative administrators complained about the locals' 'aesthetics', suggesting that the entire village had been constructed on the back of mafia-related *speculazione edilizia* (real estate speculation), done as cheaply as possible. In fact, many people visiting the village found the derelict facades of most houses embarrassing. Consumer cooperative

representatives often came from Bologna (the capital of Emilia in Northern Italy) to visit the antimafia cooperatives and confirm their collaboration. They compared San Giovanni to impoverished Bolivian villages they had visited while backpacking, when young. Once, Flavio, a representative of Coop Tirreno, a leftwing consumer coop from Bologna, came to San Giovanni to liaise with people from the cooperatives as a business partner (his coop was to distribute the antimafia cooperatives' produce in Bologna). This was a success, as it sealed links between Northern Italian consumer coops and the antimafia cooperatives.<sup>48</sup> I accompanied some of my research interlocutors who fetched him from Trapani airport. As we approached the village in the car, Flavio said to me that San Giovanni looked like a zoo and the locals ('imbued with mafia', he commented) were the animals in the zoo. He imagined that it must take a lot of effort collaborating with the locals and even suggested that, I should call myself not an ethnologist (anthropologist) but an ethologist. Later the same day, at an interview arranged in advance, Luca, the president of Falcone cooperative, was somewhat embarrassed, and apologetic towards me, regarding the idea of their business partner, and wished to clarify that the cooperatives had a specific role in the area, often not understood either by locals or by their Emilian partners:

Here [in San Giovanni] we find ourselves [he spells each syllable out clearly and raises his voice] in an *unevolved* society (*una società non-evoluta*) —not only due to the presence of the mafia but also due to the fact that income, culture and social status are in such a condition that the only thing that matters to people is the price [of the produce]. That's it. It is not important *how* something is produced – the only thing that matters is its price, nothing else. And since I work in San Giovanni and not in

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<sup>48</sup> I acknowledge that there is an absence of discussion of the issue of distribution and consumption of the organic produce of the antimafia cooperatives in the thesis. Fieldwork has elicited enough data to dedicate a chapter to this issue; however, as this is not the focus of this ethnography, I have not included these findings in my analysis. The consumption of the produce is not really relevant to the antimafia issues arising from confiscated assets nor am I trying to cover the entire economic management and entrepreneurship of the antimafia cooperatives. I note, in passing, that around 90% of the Alto Belice cooperatives produce is channelled to Tuscany and Emilia Romagna, to Legacoop consumer cooperatives. Legacoop is the left-leaning association of cooperatives of Italy, where Falcone, Borsellino, Lavoro e Altro and Libermanima adhere. Unicoop is the second largest cooperative league, historically affiliated to the DC and the centre-right.

Bologna, I have an eye open for all the world market but I pay attention on how to impose change on this reality. [emphasis added]

There were many signs of local mafia presence, which Palermitan administrators complained about. For lack of plaster, the building where I stayed, as well as most of the surrounding apartment blocks, showed bare red brick. Neighbours were proud to emphasise that ‘in a peasant community like ours, there is not much need for comfort’. Some argued that the unattractive brickwork facing the main streets of the village indicated ‘what it meant to be a peasant’ and, indeed, to come ‘from a village with a mafia past’. I associated the shabbiness with the mafia’s logic of contempt for conspicuous consumption (Arlacchi 1986: 23). When I started visiting local homes, invited by friends, housewives were happy to show off shiny new pieces of cutlery or furniture but shrugged when questioned about the lack of plaster on their house’s out-facing walls, often responding, ‘It is better to enjoy some luxury without people knowing your riches’ or ‘Better to show you are a pauper while you actually reign’. A neighbour told me a local adage popularised by *mafiosi*, to explain the apparently anti-consumerist local ethos: *megghiu cummannari chi futtiri* (it’s better to command than to fuck).<sup>49</sup>

### 1.3. People and Methods

My ethnography is based on data gathered from studying the everyday life of people involved in the antimafia cooperatives and the Consortium in the village of San Giovanni. My focus on the use of confiscated mafia land also took me to the other seven villages of the Consortium as well as conducting some interviews in Palermo or San Giovanni. My general approach was to follow the lives of cooperative members through their inter-related social spaces: confiscated vineyards, cooperative offices and peasant homes in San Giovanni, as well as meeting places of antimafia activist organisations in Palermo. In that

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<sup>49</sup> The adage implies that pleasure comes from controlling people, rather than enjoying material luxuries. Arlacchi also notes the lack of conspicuous consumption among Sicilian *mafiosi*, unlike, for example, Neapolitan *cammoristi* (1986; 1993; 2010).

sense, my ethnographic material comes from participant observation with around 150 research participants involving three different, yet interconnected, social networks. Firstly there were people involved in public institutions and civil society associations in the Alto Belice villages and in Palermo, namely the Consortium, Libera and Arci NGOs, as well as lawyers and associations dealing with antimafia issues. Secondly, interacting with village peasants also led to minor entrepreneurs (e.g. *café* and *bar* owners) and others related to the cooperatives in some capacity, for instance, suppliers of seed or of fertilizers – and grapes. About 20 farmers sold their produce to the cooperatives, through supplier contracts stipulating their adherence to ‘the antimafia cause’. My main research participants, however, the backbone of my fieldwork, were the people who made (at least part of) their living working with the antimafia cooperatives. These included farm workers (cooperative worker-members and agrarian daily workers,) seasonal workers in the cooperatives’ *agrotourism* department and office-based administrators of the cooperatives Giovanni Falcone, Paolo Borsellino and Lavoro E Altro (as well as some from Liberaanima, based in Partinico, a town just outside Alto Belice). Most key interlocutors were members of the Falcone and the Borsellino cooperatives, whose shared offices in San Giovanni, made it quite straightforward to use a ‘snowball’ sampling technique among their members. For Lavoro e Altro, less represented here, I traced people connected to this organisation when I visited Curriuni periodically for pre-arranged meetings or just staying at their office, a space entangled with local life. Liberaanima, which people called the ‘fourth antimafia cooperative’, consisted of only five people, all of whom I interviewed.

Reflecting the fact that methods and argumentation are in dialogue with each other, my methods in studying the cooperatives’ office-based administrators and the agricultural workers (worker-members and ‘daily’ members (see 1.2.1) evolved as I became more aware of how their relationships were constituted as a two-tiered system. Pursuing the emergent issue of these different groups of informants’ social situatedness required different



methodological approaches, which ultimately showed a multiplicity of differentiating social factors: class (by and large middle-class/working-class), location (urban/rural), generation/age difference (administrators much younger, by a median of 12 years), family responsibilities (most administrators were unmarried and had no children, while manual workers were married with children), gender (the manual workforce team was composed of men only). This is also one of the reasons why I explored people's wider social networks outside the cooperative context, as described above.

The other way in which I went outside the cooperative context was to follow the other livelihood activities of the manual agricultural workers (members *and* non members, i.e. the 'daily workers'). This entailed visits to homes, work in their private land plots and spending leisure time in cafés. In the summer months, I also formed focus groups and conducted participant observation among a number of young volunteers from Northern Italy, who participated in the harvest of the cooperatives joining a volunteer work service programme organised by Libera.

Participant observation involved sharing my time between the office and vineyards of the Falcone and Borsellino, voluntarily working as 'an unpaid pen-pusher and a *bracciante* in the same working day,' as local member-worker Enzo pointed out. However, this intense experience of combining the two types of work participation 'in the same working day' was mainly during the harvest season.

Rushing from the fields to the office became my routine in periods of the agricultural cycle that demanded intensive work in the plots: after an 8-hour shift in the vineyard starting around 6 a.m., I would then get to the offices for my afternoon 'rota', staying for a few hours, usually from 2 to 5 pm. The offices (as noted, shared by the two cooperatives) were the site of my participant observation of the lives of the coop administrators' work. Following my research interlocutors in their day-to-day work during these periods required meticulously planned strategies of coordination, waking up at 5.30

am, waiting to be fetched by a local worker's car (Adamo's, Fano's or Tano's), travelling to the fields and then engaging in manual labour. When there was no need for agricultural work, I visited the administrative offices every day, and stayed through the members' eight-hour shifts. I interviewed interlocutors, gave a hand with administrative work, or simply spent time around people working or visiting there – and often departed for other places or meetings, with the car of the Falcone cooperative, accompanying a member.

The bulk of participant observation among the manual workforce involved work in the vineyards alongside the cooperatives' worker-members and daily workers. Among the Alto Belice locals, most of my informants were local peasants, with very modest livelihoods. Agricultural production, especially viticulture (mainly Sicilian white varieties), is the main source of income for most households. I followed workers during the agricultural cycle, doing work such as spraying, caring and watering the vines, and eventually harvesting their grapes; I also followed some in their private plots and homes. The harvest demanded particularly intensive work; it was then that the entire manual workforce (member-workers and daily workers was deployed), from mid August to early October. Working the soil on the confiscated land was a satisfying endeavour, which provided insights into people's experience of the labour process, as well as their views on how working for the cooperatives was a meaningful and moral activity.

Therefore, most empirical data informing this thesis' arguments about relatedness (Chapter 4), livelihoods composed by employment and income opportunities (Chapter 5), moralities and attitudes to land (Chapter 6) and local gossip (Chapter 7) comes from liaising with cooperatives' manual labourers on a daily basis, at work and leisure (cafés). I also recorded the life stories of some local workers, such as Enzo, Adamo and Giuseppe.

Coming back to the first group of research informants (as identified in 1.2.1), Because lawyers, NGO activists, Consortium agents and policymakers all informed the project of the confiscations and distribution of land, I learned, interviewing them, about

their ideas on ‘community’ and ‘justice’. These interviews provided the material needed to explore state ideologies of community (often referred to as *collettività*, ‘collectivity’<sup>50</sup>), integrated into cooperativism, as well as to examine the ‘extraordinary’ legal measures to tackle mafia. (The bulk of the tape-recorded material I gathered came from Consortium administrators and lawyers. Interviews with these people inform the thesis throughout, especially regarding ideologies of and the state actors’ different views on the mafia and antimafia change.)

Regarding law, landed property and ownership (Chapter 6), a significant source of data was official and legal paperwork produced by the Consortium, the cooperatives and the Courts of Justice. Plot maps and confiscation documents, as well as legal ownership documentation from the Italian Cadastre offered a rich source of material that I integrated into my ethnographic narrative. For much of this archival work I drew on my experience as a lawyer, particularly as regards scrutinising court hearings and rulings as well as property documents. The state archival material is particularly illuminating concerning the stories inscribed in their records, as anthropologists have suggested (Tarlo 2000; Hamilton et al. 2002). In my case, tracing the legal property titles of some confiscated assets revealed histories of people to whom *mafiosi* had had assets registered as straw people; I traced some of these cases back to the real people behind the names on paper. This opened the research to fascinating stories that informed my scrutiny of ‘moral ownerships’ in 6.2.

Although what constitutes a ‘*mafioso*’ is legally defined (Article 416bis, Italian Criminal Code), mafia activity rests on certain degrees of social consensus. Therefore, just as the term ‘political economy’ cannot contain what happens on the ground regarding the coops’ economic activity, similarly ‘mafia’ is a far more complex condition than the term

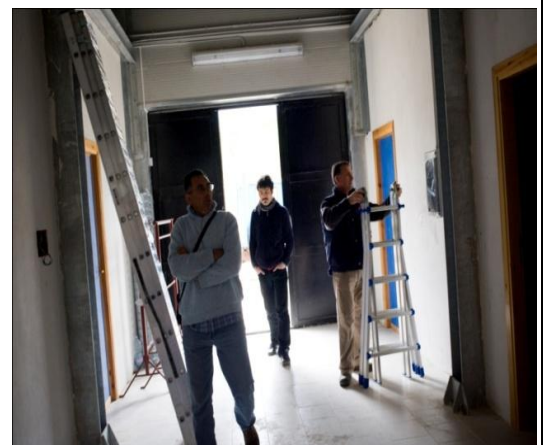
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<sup>50</sup> In the context of these communications, the terms *comunità* and *collettività* were often used interchangeably but interlocutors clarified when I asked. *Collettività* had a more encompassing meaning, projecting the cooperative’s endeavour on a national scale – thus presenting Alto Belice as a paradigmatic community for antimafia in Italy at large.

‘mafia-related crime’ entails, demanding a multidisciplinary approach, for which my background in law was useful. In this regard, accessing these documents and the juridico-political discourse about them was as valid for my anthropological research as observing how their implementation influenced the everyday realities of informants. Especially with regard to change in property statuses, a vast literature in anthropology reads in legal documentation the disputes and fissures among people on the ground (for instance Davis 1973; Mundy 2002; 2007). In contemporary Sicily, both in legal paperwork and on the soil of the vineyards, the lines between state activity and the agency of the family, as well as between policy and what constitutes kinship, become blurred, in a constant interaction between lived experience and legal categorisation. While the Consortium’s and the 109/96 law’s redistribution policies have materially contributed to positive change in people’s livelihoods, they have also presented locals with a series of intricate responsibilities, which potentially undermine the fixity of land property statuses after the confiscations. As an anthropologist who has undergone legal training, I traced these intricacies from land to law and back, paying attention to people’s experiences.



**Photo 6:** Member-workers (the four men in the foreground) and volunteers (the younger people in the background) of the Borsellino during lunch break in the vineyards of Castello, during harvest, in August. At the front: Niki, Peppe, Ciccio, and Donato.



**Photo 7:** Two members of the Falcone cooperative in the Cento winery: Enzo and Paolo; they are cousins and come from the same village, Rocca.

#### **1.4. Ethics and Positionality: Informed Consent, Confidentiality, Safety and Reciprocity**

Research among people struggling against the mafia posed a number of ethical issues before, during and after fieldwork. I originally handed a personal declaration to the three cooperatives' presidents, stating that all information gathered was to be totally confidential, masked behind careful layers of anonymity in my thesis and in any articles that would stem from my research. To the best of my abilities, I gave the same assurance, orally, with each person I came into first contact with. My emphasis on how I had to change all names of people, places and organisations, however, provoked curiosity rather than ease among many interlocutors.

In fact, it was in relation to confidentiality that I first glimpsed how the two-tiered organisation of the cooperatives reflected differentiated ethics (moralities). Seeking to organise my methodology to accommodate the intricacies of the cooperatives' division of labour in terms of ethics, required some telling manoeuvres. (As noted, methods and argumentation converge). The administration members could not grasp why I wanted to be so 'secretive' when their remit was all about publicity and transparency. Some explained to me that not anonymising posed no dangers to them, as they had already been exposed quite extensively to the local society, and even on a national scale. In fact, some saw my research as another channel of publicity. For them, publicly 'naming' *mafiosi* as well as publicising names of antimafia activists was part of their antimafia activism.

The manual workforce, on the other hand, living in Alto Belice, took a different stance. They were careful to remind me that what they shared with me could be publicised 'anywhere I wanted but Sicily'. Tano for instance told me, that 'as long as it remains in the limits of my village and my island, I want you to be cautious'. I followed this advice and managed to act according to the needs of different informants. These contradictions posed severe ethical issues for my research but I followed the confidentiality protocols suggested

for anthropological fieldwork, not revealing interlocutors' identities and protecting them from each other (Caplan 2003; Edel and Edel 2000). This was particularly significant, given that I met a few *mafiosi* while doing fieldwork, whose names I also altered for the thesis (but not those currently imprisoned for life).

People's ideas on safety thus echoed the cooperatives' internal division between the administration/office-based/Palermitan team and the agricultural/fields-based/local team. As I was not a local, most villagers who were not connected to the cooperatives thought I was a new member of the administration team of a cooperative. My first impression was that this could entail risks. Initially, feeling in danger was a prominent emotional state for me: I spent the first months of fieldwork worrying about mafia intimidation, always carrying with me a USB with all my notes, naively fearing that someone would break into my house. As with confidentiality, and in relation to it, I initially projected ideas on safety (informed by my anthropological training) onto my relationships with locals. A few months into the fieldwork process, the more I acknowledged that often 'mafia' and antimafia were interwoven in San Giovanni, the more I realised that my disquiet was groundless: there was no reason to believe that local *mafiosi* wished to harm me or my interlocutors. There had been hardly any violent or threatening activities against cooperative members.

Notions of danger and safety were contested issues in the field, on the relative safety of interlocutors and anthropologist sometimes conflicted. For instance, Adamo, a 40-year-old agricultural member-worker of Falcone from San Giovanni, commented on my unwillingness to meet a *mafioso* recently out of prison, calling me 'a pussy and a fake anthropologist,' suggesting that 'a real man and a proper anthropologist should be into this kind of stuff'. The *mafioso* was a friend of his; Adamo insisted I meet him. For Adamo, the danger in this case was if the office-based administrators found out about our dealings, as this could have had consequences for his position as a member of the cooperative (see Chapter 7). I felt I had to find a balance between the danger of being challenged by his

perceptions of what constituted a ‘real man’ and a ‘real anthropologist’ and the danger of being discovered by members of the office team as someone who had relations with ‘the mafia’. I opted for the first danger, and met the *mafioso*.

Some days after I had met the man and interviewed him, 31-year-old Marelio, an administrative member of Falcone, called me in. He had overheard me talking on the phone and suspected I had dealings with *mafiosi*. Finding this situation dangerous, he asked for details. I clarified that I could not share information with him, in order to protect informants by not revealing who says what to me. He commented that I was buying into *omertà*, the dangerous ethics of the mafia code of silence. He therefore identified what anthropologists perceive as ethical behaviour, with mafia morality. Silvio, the 34-year-old president of Borsellino, an administrator as well, heard through local gossip about my contact with Adamo and the *mafioso*. He thought my contacts with ‘the mafia’ put me in danger and suggested disciplining the person whom he suspected had led me to establish bridges between ‘the cooperative and the mafia’. This was the danger Adamo had mentioned, as it imperilled his job. Thankfully, he was never disciplined.

This event elucidates the subtle ethical challenges I faced during fieldwork. Codes of conduct were informed by the cooperative distribution of labour (influenced by people’s class and other background), revealing the often contradictory morals that separated colleagues in the cooperative, divided across distribution of labour, personal background, participation in local kinship and friendship networks. It also shows the relationality of my research position: contingent to each *specific* relationship I established with people. In the background is the heavily gendered nature of my fieldwork, as ‘being a man’ was understood as a performed pattern of behaviour that I had to live up to in order to fulfil expectations some interlocutors had from me. Episodes like this allowed me to reflect on my gendered position in the field and on how the, arguably rigid, ethics of anthropological

fieldwork often contrast indigenous ideas about respectability, as the fact that confidentiality was glossed as '*omertà*' shows.

The effects of such reflexivity, triggered by my interaction with locals, touched on other issues of research positionality. The much discussed issue of the anthropological researcher's 'privileged' position vis-à-vis their research participants only partly applied to my case. My physical features, knowledge of Italian popular culture and literature,<sup>51</sup> non-suggestive accent, and relative experience in agrarian work, even led many locals, when meeting me for the first time, to treat me as a Sicilian visitor to the area. My (basic level) knowledge of the Sicilian dialect, dubbed a language in itself by most locals, was also an asset. However, when a conversation moved from Italian to Sicilian, interlocutors immediately realised I was not from the island, which then often became the object of jokes and sarcasm.<sup>52</sup> My degree of familiarity shaped most of my initial interactions with interlocutors, from 'extreme' cases where some informants joked that I must have Sicilian origins and even felt that my being Greek confirmed this to the majority of interlocutors who, while appreciating my facility in relevant matters, eagerly insisted on the uniqueness of Sicily as a cultural hybrid formed of centuries-old distillations of cultures. However, for most, 'the Hellenic aspect' shone above other facets: Sicilians were 'Greeks who had become Italians'.

These (perhaps essentialist) accounts worked in most cases to my benefit, as I gained people's trust, which allowed me access to their lived spaces. Many locals were

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<sup>51</sup> My stay as an Erasmus exchange student at Rome's LUISS (Libera Università Internazionale degli Studi Sociali) university during 2002 had familiarised me with such particularities of life in Italy; my previous visits to Sicily had familiarised me with details ranging from local *trattorie* to names of *mafia* clans. Finally, my engagement with translations of contemporary Italian poetry added an insight into a field many people appreciated. Villagers discussed with me anything from D'Annunzio's verse to perceptions of Berlusconi abroad.

<sup>52</sup> It is worth noting that the bilingual environment of my fieldwork research implied different, class-informed registers of language: the Palermitan administrators spoke 'proper' Italian, whilst the local workers spoke in dialect. I acknowledge this in my translations, opting for colloquial words to transmit some of the 'colour' of Sicilian but also to underline how language reflects class in cooperatives.



intrigued by the presence of ‘the Greek’ among them, and some identified similarities between Sicily and Greece: the two regions were, allegedly, ‘insular’, relatively impoverished and ‘corrupt’ peripheries of a nonetheless historically rich European ‘South’. Although this relationship was sometimes uncomfortable, partially accepting these labels won the trust of many people, as they saw in me someone from a background no more privileged than theirs, especially when I explained that I was raised in a rural area where viticulture was the way most people made their living. During participant observation in the vineyards, this personal background was particularly appreciated by co-workers.

The gendered aspect of this assimilation, however, had counter-productive effects; despite the fact that (or possibly because) I looked like many locals, my status as an unmarried young man in the village did not help in gaining access to households where young women lived. This problem was somewhat alleviated with time, especially when a female friend visited me in the field. This gave me the reputation of being engaged, which I confirmed when asked. Nevertheless, I never managed to enter the homes of most of my interlocutors. This biased my research, as the data gathered from spending time with female research participants, usually housewives, could have been richer and wider otherwise.<sup>53</sup>

These issues also conditioned my ways of reciprocating towards my research participants, to bring back to them a sense of the research achievements and returning some of their trust. Cigarettes and liquor from Greece became popular among agrarian workers of the cooperatives. When I had to meet people outside the work context but, for reasons mentioned above, not in their homes, I made sure I treated them to drinks or a meal, although this proved, in a couple of cases, to violate their own principles of

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<sup>53</sup> Women, in San Giovanni and Alto Belice at large, rarely work outside the household, and most definitely never in the fields, as I discuss in Chapters 5 and 6. Gendered issues defined the local political economy in and around the cooperatives; drawing from the admittedly often gender-informed data, I aim to elucidate this facet of people’s livelihoods in the ethnography.

hospitality, which I eventually opted to prioritise. Another contribution I managed to offer was English lessons to some coop members, particularly the president of the Falcone cooperative, Luca. He enthusiastically asked me to help him, as he thought English skills were valuable for the cooperative's development, now that they had started, in a modest way, to export to niche markets in Germany. These intensive language classes helped create a bond early on. Some cooperative members commented that, while, as a researcher, I aimed to being 'taught' by Luca, I ended up teaching him: this reciprocity reinforced the inter-subjectivity of the ethnographic experience.

It is important to note that most interlocutors saw my presence in the village as a 'success of the antimafia'. Fifteen years ago, I was told, this research would have been impossible, as I probably would have been assassinated. I am aware that this was proof, for many people, of the change the cooperatives had brought about. In this respect at least, intentions and outcomes of action were identical. Peppe, a young research interlocutor, insightfully remarked that '*you* are the answer to your research question,' meaning that my very safe presence in the field was already proof that Sicily had changed immensely. This thesis describes, analyses and problematises this change.

## **1.5. Thesis Overview (Description of Chapters)**

**Chapter 2** locates my thesis within the relevant literature, identifying sources that influenced my analysis. Firstly, I discuss debates on mafia and antimafia, proposing that mafia has always been entrepreneurial and that analysis of the recent antimafia movement's responses should be focused on livelihoods, rather than on civil society politics, so central to existing research. Following the lead of economic anthropology in rejecting the idea of 'the economy' as an autonomous sphere, I examine 'cooperativism' as a notion that has been open to interpretation related to members' moralities. Different, contradictory political ideologies, and corporatist and radical processes alike, have influenced cooperativism. My work discusses how the economic and political systems (markets and

states) in which cooperatives integrate, inform their internal divisions of labour, focusing on diverse ethics and practices. I discuss how anthropologists have approached the state and law, especially in relation to the separation of work from home, as it has been central to conceptualising cooperativism. Noting discussions on the state as ‘imagined’, *sensu* Anderson, I also pay attention to the tangible, grounded consequences of state activity; following Ferguson and Scott, I consider both intended and unintentional results. Land and law being central to conceptualisations of the state, I also discuss how anthropology has understood land as property. As debates about property often discuss states in transition, I address literature looking at change at state level, while also stressing distinctions between ‘mythical’ and ‘jural’ land categories.

**Chapter 3** historicises the relationships among mafia, the state, and the peasant movement in Alto Belice. A historical ethnography of local struggles for land and cooperativism, useful to conceptualise the continuities and transformations of agents and practices, it offers the background to current events. The key concept is the dynamic configurations among state, mafia, local forms of cooperativism and antimafia struggle. I analyse processes that gave rise to the antimafia movement, arguing that Sicilian cooperativism developed incorporating antimafia ideology and practice. Like Anderson’s nationalism, cooperativism is a modular notion, acquiring various meanings according to different historical circumstances. In Alto Belice, its dynamic relationship to the law was expressed in ‘revolutionary legality’. A history of local struggles for access to land and markets entailed, by and large, two modes of organisation of the local peasantry and different *mafiosi* practices (from patronage to brokerage). Firstly, before the agrarian reform of 1953, the landless peasants’ struggle focused on claiming land and involved land occupations and the formation of ‘revolutionary legalist’ cooperatives, aimed against the latifundo system, landlords and their *mafiosi* middlemen, the *gabellotti*, who orchestrated the 1947 Portella della Ginestra massacre. Secondly, after the land reform, when most local

peasants became smallholders, their focus of struggle became gaining access to markets. The peasant movement organised new cooperative models (wineries), relevant to this day, to avoid a new form of mafia: the *senzali*, brokers who controlled produce price, grapes specifically. Contemporary antimafia cooperatives, influenced by both workers' and producers' cooperativism have taken on board this history in selective ways.

**Chapter 4** focuses on the ways cooperative members were recruited, making three arguments: different ideas of relatedness granted people access to work in the cooperatives; these were expressed in different idioms (*raccomandazioni* and networking), conveying different approaches and often transforming local kinship ideas; distinct spheres of relatedness formed through this process in the cooperatives. Across the coops' labour division, the administrators rejected kinship-based recruitment, arguing it cannot elude mafia-bound local relationships. Reflecting ideas of the Consortium, they promoted political alliances organised around networking, forming what they called meritocracy-centred 'virtuous circles', which constituted, as I argue using Bourdieu, non-kinship relatedness. Conversely, manual labourers used kinship-based *raccomandazioni* (recommendations) to hire new people. This local code transformed established ideas of kinship, blurring boundaries between home and work, to produce 'antimafia families'. Each recruitment idiom was used by one group only, forming relations among equals of similar class and origin backgrounds. While they each contributed to the making of the cooperatives in complementary ways, there was no communication between these spheres of relatedness. Horizontal relations in the cooperatives became problematic. When administrators attempt to appropriate the *raccomandazioni* idiom, workers rejected the 'political' *raccomandazioni* as immoral patronage. Following this finding, I propose new approaches to patronage.

**Chapter 5** focuses on the livelihoods of local cooperative workers and their families. It examines practices making up families' income, alongside changes that the

cooperatives brought about. The key idea is that locals pursued their livelihoods not only inside the cooperatives' regulated employment framework but also outside it. This chapter juxtaposes local workers' participation in the new regime of cooperative waged work (which, as noted at the very start of the thesis, was a breakthrough locally) with their continuing engagement with two practices: land registration to women and a 'mutual aid' system of exchanging informal work. These continuities do not imply static repetition of 'tradition'. Registering land to wives acquired new meanings after men were employed by the cooperatives, becoming a tool to claim unemployment benefits. I argue that, ironically, the employment 'standardisation' that antimafia cooperatives introduced served to reinforce an informal income-seeking practice, which in fact stemmed from mafia ethics. Furthermore, alongside their employment by the cooperatives, local men continued to exchange informal labour for money. The cooperatives took a part in tracking down this illicit practice and penalising local peasants. I discuss how peasants' political mobilisations 'against the state' incorporated demands to de-penalise their 'mutual aid' practice, and also how *mafiosi* tapped in to the situation, promoting the idea that the practice was part of the local 'way of life' that antimafia activists were trying to eliminate. Formal waged employment, household strategies and informal work are thus interwoven to show how the cooperatives' employment co-articulated with contested local informal livelihood practices.

**Chapter 6** looks at Alto Belice land plots. The main argument is that the interaction between one system of value, codified in jural landed property, and local values, based on a notion of 'moral ownership', informed the social arrangements around the plots. I firstly examine changes in the legal status of land as property, arguing that lawmakers incorporated local 'kinship' categories (family, clan) and assumptions about gender and genealogy into the legal categorisation of property. These assumptions, legally reified in the context of confiscating mafia land left non-confiscated mafia plots (*familiari*) in uncomfortable proximity with cooperative-'owned' plots, which often shared a common

boundary. Administrators saw, in the boundaries of the confiscated plots, the borders of the ‘moral universe’ of antimafia. By contrast, most locals recognised degrees of moral ownership (a flexible notion, reflecting Abramson’s idea on ‘mythical land’) accorded to the *mafiosi* past land proprietors, drawing on different values (neighbourliness, gender) to contest the consequences of the jural re-categorising of property. Workers’ allegiance to moral ownership and the continuing practices of plot neighbours distressed administrators. The chapter shows the unintended, contradictory results produced by state activity: aiming to dissociate *mafiosi* from the cooperatives, the law actually produced proximities that brought them closer.

**Chapter 7** examines the interactions cooperative administrators had with locals in San Giovanni. I argue that gossip was used by administrators and by others (locals and the police) to monitor points of intersection between mafia and antimafia. Intercepting the flows of informal information locally, the administrative cooperative members kept a surveillance watch, identifying their potential local allies but also policing their fellow – local – coop worker-members to ward against the ‘contaminating’ threat of mafia contact. In treating gossip as a resource, administrators were appropriating a local code in order to protect the cooperatives *from* the local community. ‘Gossiping’ – the exchange of rumours, the narrative performance of stories – was an established local practice in which local men circulated ideas and news and positioned themselves vis-à-vis others, participated in by people as different as barmen, policemen and *mafiosi*. For coop administrators, tapping into gossip was a means to police the ‘moral borders’ of the cooperative, an idea put forward in Chapter 6 and extended here from land to discourse. The most significant gossip for the administrators was about the chain of gossip itself: who was talking with whom, which I look at in terms of gossip as meta-talk, talk about talk. If cooperative members talked with *mafiosi* or with those close to them, they were liable to being ousted from the cooperatives.

Moreover, some locals utilised rumours about them and shifted from mafia to antimafia stances.

# Chapter 2

## Cooperatives, the State, Land, Mafia and Antimafia: Theoretical Debates and Contributions

### Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the literature from current economic and political anthropology and other social sciences on the themes salient to my work: the mafia/antimafia relationship, cooperatives and – through them – the state/law and land. The aim is to delineate the key theoretical issues presented in the ethnographic discussion. For other themes that arise in the ethnography, alluded to in this chapter (relatedness, patronage, kinship and the law, livelihoods, and reputation), I weave theoretical reflections into each chapter's narrative. The present chapter locates the thesis in relation to the current state of play of the discipline, acknowledging wider discussions for which there is no scope to expand in the ethnography.

Exploring cooperatives highlights interactions with legal and local value systems. I emphasise the ideological processes that inform cooperatives' internal divisions of labour, locating the sources of these ideologies often in structures external to them, and emphasising the different morals of their workforces. As cooperatives interact with legislation and often develop partially as state projects (as in Alto Belice), I present aspects of the relevant literature on law and the state. Then, I go on to examine property, the state's way of categorising land, the main resource at stake in Alto Belice cooperatives, identifying the ruptures that antimafia property legislation brought about.

The heart of this thesis is an analysis of political cooperativism, especially in its relation to the state and to people's livelihoods. The antimafia cooperatives, however, have emerged in a very specific configuration of tensions between state and mafia power. They have been endowed with the mission to affirm state power over Alto Belice and, precisely



for this reason, were bestowed with land that the state had confiscated from *mafiosi*. As explained in the next chapter, historically the relationship of state and mafia throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been more often one of connivance and collusion than of conflict. Chapter 1 has already located the historical specificity of the rise of the antimafia cooperatives in terms of the shift in state policy towards radical antimafia intervention in the early to mid-1990s, which underlies the specifics of this unique cooperativist endeavour. Hence, this chapter begins with a theoretical discussion that seeks – albeit through a somewhat oblique approach – to elucidate the development of mafia and the political counter-responses to it, which have taken a variety of forms including but by no means limited to the burst of antimafia activism in the 1990s.

## **2.1. Mafia and Antimafia: Tradition, Change and Livelihoods**

Rather than focusing centrally on the mafia, this thesis explores the social arrangements of a project of social transformation in a changing Sicily (Davis 1996). Contemporary Sicily, undergoing changes influenced by the mix of mobilisations dubbed ‘the antimafia movement’ (Jamieson 2000; Orlando 2003; Santino 2000; Schneider and Schneider 2002b; 2003), is an ideal site to explore how this social–political ‘experiment’ relates to continuity and change, a central concern of anthropological enquiry (Bloch 1989: 132). In Chapter 3, I locate this question in historical time (Fabian 2002; Kalb and Tak 2006), exploring how the historical interrelationship of mafia and antimafia has been negotiated in contemporary Sicily, in the context of the island’s ongoing experience of decades of continual change (Schneider and Schneider 2006).

Engaging with social change has been problematic for anthropologists as well as for geographers and historians of the region. There has been much debunking of the way that ‘the Mediterranean’ has been constructed as an ethnographic and geographical region characterised by stasis, whether of social structures or moral discourses (Goddard et al. 1994a and 1994b): broadly, the survival of ‘tradition’. Some critiques focus on the way

gendered identities and kinship relations are portrayed in terms of a stagnant continuity with the past (Goddard 2000), while others have tackled the conventional geographical depiction of the Mediterranean as a region unified through the association of patronage with 'tradition' (Kockel et al. 2012a and b; Stacul et al. 2006). The idea of 'honour', as a distinctive mafia tradition (Blok 1981; Falcone 1993; Calderone and Arlacchi 1993; Gilmore 1987), has been challenged by historians in accounting for change (Bell 2007). Related to the critique of assumptions about the persistence of an immobile, change-resistant, world of 'tradition', anthropologists have also questioned the essentialising of Sicily in much literature and ethnology (Blim 1998; Saunders 1998; cf. Whyte 1944).

This is the context in which the theme of mafia was long located, associated with the reinforcing of the idea of 'tradition' in Sicily. Attempts to reorient this intellectual project notably include the ethnographic work of Blok, and Schneider and Schneider, who have proposed dynamic historical explanatory schemes that account for continuity and change in ways that re-situate perceived ideas of tradition. Blok (1974) focused attention on configurations of different levels of power, while Schneider and Schneider (1976) called upon world-systems theory to understand the mafia as itself undergoing constant 'transformative experience' (1999), meanwhile focusing on 'cultural codes' where the meaning of change is figured in relation to (not temporal but social) continuities in values (1976: 81). I take up this idea to denote continuities of local codes with *antimafia* rather than mafia values, but also to position certain local practices in the context of dynamic activities. I also build on Schneider and Schneider's use of the notion of 'broker capitalism' (1976: 160) to explore the dual position of Alto Belice *mafiosi* as longstanding patrons and subsequently brokers.

Some aspects of the 'tradition' problem are rooted in Banfield's 'modernisation' paradigm, presented as a critique of 'familism' (Banfield 1958). This approach has had an enduring, albeit implicit, influence on the sociology of Sicily and Southern European

societies at large. In Alto Belice, the Consortium employed a strict rhetoric and practice suspicious of continuities with local relations, thought of as primordial. In building the cooperatives, it appears that there was a political aversion towards kinship, understood as part of a problematic tradition linked to mafia (although, as my ethnography will show, *antimafia* cooperativism *did* converge with family structures). In this vein, historians and anthropologists have argued that the mafia rose through Sicily's dislocated route towards modernisation (Blok 2000; Schneider and Schneider 2003; Dickie 2004; Lupo 1993; 2011).

Classic Sicilian authors themselves present fatalistic, albeit complex, views of the island's population. Giovanni Falcone felt he was 'an instrument of the State in a *terra infidelium*' (1991: 9), adding that 'the culture of death does not solely belong to the mafia: all of Sicily is impregnated with it' (1992: 73). Literary works also associate Sicily with impeded social change and inertia, often resorting to essentialisms. Sciascia (1996) saw the playwright Pirandello and 'pirandelism' as a metaphor for Sicily; his own writings on the mafia are pessimistic about the possibility of change (1979). Tellingly, the most cited phrase in modern European literature regarding fin-de-siècle Sicily's capacity for historical change comes from Tomasi di Lampedusa's Sicilian masterpiece *The Leopard*: 'everything must change so that everything can stay the same' (*se vogliamo che tutto rimanga com'è, bisogna che tutto cambi*, 2010: 23). My fieldwork illuminated this maxim, which I had originally resisted, convincing me that it has some degree of validity.

Legal theorists and historians have described mafia as Sicily's 'most enduring problem' (Finley et al. 1987: xi; Turone 2008: 36). Most themes of ethnographic research in Sicily coincide with mafia: gender and honour (Blok 2000), brokerage and cultural codes (Schneider and Schneider 1976), reproduction and class (Schneider and Schneider 1996), land ownership and violence (Blok 1974), friendship (Boissevain 1965), politics (Chubb 1982 and 1989; Dolci 1968; cf. Dolci 2007), immigration (Cole 1997; Lane 2010), gender (Dino 2006), 'cultural values and codes' (Gambetta 2009), social consensus (Dino 2011).

The fact that such diverse research converges around mafia indicates not simply its relevance across many fields of Sicilian social life but, rather, that the mafia orchestrates something close to a system of ‘total services’ (*sensu* Mauss 2002: 7), as it encompasses such a wide range of social life. Moreover, Sicily is referenced as the prototypical case for comparative studies of emerging forms of organised crime elsewhere, drawing analogies with Cosa Nostra (Allum and Siebert 2003; Glenny 2009; Varese 2006; 2011). The island and the mafia have been linked as an archetype for academic researchers as well as for lay people: Sicily is ‘mafia’s *locus classicus*’.

But what is *the* mafia? The notion itself has not attracted recent anthropological interest. Earlier anthropological work focused on the social relations and cultural associations of people associated with the mafia rather than providing a strict definition of the mafia itself (see, for instance, Blok 1974 and 2000), an emphasis that is followed in this thesis as well. On the other hand, sociologists have attempted to grapple with the concept, principally by underlining the distinctiveness of mafia vis-à-vis organised crime in other contexts (Santino 1997; cf. Hill 2006). Sociologists have both drawn from legal theory and inspired it: the distinction is crystallised in the Italian Criminal Code (art 416, paragraphs 1, 2). Article 416 *bis* (Paragraph 3), arguably the most debated article of the Code, defines a *mafia* association in the following terms:

Mafia-type unlawful association is said to exist when the participants take advantage of the intimidating power of the association and of the resulting conditions of submission and silence [omertà] to commit criminal offences, to manage or in any way control, either directly or indirectly, economic activities, concessions, authorizations, public contracts and services, or to obtain unlawful profits or advantages for themselves or for any other persons... (cited in Turone n.d.)

This is the most convincing definition to date of what makes an organised crime group *the mafia*; it is significant that this is endorsed by the Criminal Code. It stands largely as the interdisciplinary interaction of work in both legal theory and sociology. Mafia, in Santino’s sociological analysis, is defined as at once a network and an organisation,

employing a set of welfare and of coercion practices (2006; 2007). The relationship between force and consensus in the making of mafia's power is widely discussed as a historical tension between strategies of intimidation and consent-acquisition that mould communities' relative adaptation to and collaboration with *mafiosi* practices (Schneider and Schneider 2003; Santino 2005).

In this thesis, I shall treat this definition as a starting point, while paying attention to the implications of anthropological analysis, which, would treat the term mafia<sup>1</sup> as descriptive of both a structured organisation and of a hub of networks that pursues intimidatory activity by controlling a territory, i.e. drawing on a degree of social consensus in a specific locality; (and San Giovanni provides an excellent example).

Mafia's peculiar capacity for and power of intimidation (Turone 2008), distinct from that of organised crime, implies the enduring organisation of efficient capitalist entrepreneurship that mobilises local networks, as well as the exercise of coercion. Some theorists have acknowledged this entrepreneurial spirit as a break with 'tradition', while others (Lupo 2010) saw mafia's entrepreneurship as an element that renders the organisation as an essentially modern phenomenon.

Arlacchi's classic monograph (1986) identified a 'mafia spirit of capitalism' rising in the 1980s (see also Arlacchi 2007). Before this, he argued, mafia activity had been 'primordial', developed on 'agrarian' and 'archaic' bases: the convergence between honour and wealth sparked a 'new' mafia (Arlacchi 1983: 120; Hobsbawm 1965). Influenced by this definition of a modernised, capitalist mafia, some authors drew on theories of 'social

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<sup>1</sup> The first use of the term 'mafia' is in 1864, in the play *I mafiusi de la Vicaria*. The Sicilian early anthropologist Giuseppe Pitrè (1841-1916) was the first to point this out. It is generally agreed that the mafia is as modern as the Italian state (Dickie 2004). The mafia rose with the Risorgimento in the 1860s, developed with land-overseers such as the *gabeloti*, and established itself throughout Sicilian 20<sup>th</sup> century history (see chapter 3), eventually as the Cosa Nostra, whose entrepreneurial peak (the time it achieved the highest levels of profit and influence), was in the 1980s-1990s through international heroin trafficking.

capital', inspired by Putnam's account of the lack of civic traditions in Southern Italy (1993), to analyse this 'new', entrepreneurial, Cosa Nostra filling gaps of 'trust' (Gambetta 1996; Allum 2006; Gunnarson 2008; but see Sciarrone's critique, drawing on mafia's historical dynamism, 2009: 45).

Interrogating the theme of mafia entrepreneurialism, some Sicilian economists and sociologists linked it to 'regional underdevelopment' (Centorrino et al. 1999: 37), often connected to its effects on speculative capitalism (Fantò 1999). Thus the 'parasitical' mafia, through racketeering, drives out legitimate investors (Centorrino et al. 2003). Mafia's 'unsustainable development' combines financialisation with a 'reserve army of criminals' to accumulate resources (Perna 1994). Thus, to live in the land of mafia offers the strange privilege of experiencing the 'obscure origin' of wealth in the capitalist process (Saviano 2007: 17). These perspectives stress the coexistence of tradition and transformation in the changing shape of mafia activity, nuancing Arlacchi's original point. With the mafia reconceptualised as constantly undergoing change (Paoli 2003; Dino 2002; but see Pizzini Gambetta 2006), the antimafia movement has itself responded in terms of constant transformation (Santino 2000; 2007).

Lupo disagrees with Arlacchi's emphasis on a sudden mafia modernisation, noting that *mafiosi* were active members of the Sicilian bourgeoisie, leading cosmopolitan lifestyles: *Don Calò Vizzini* reportedly took part in international meetings of the sulphur mine owners' association in London in the 1920s (Lupo 2011: 8), while *mafiosi*:

... were organisers of cooperatives and won much of their power base by serving as intermediaries in the transfer of land from the large landowners to the peasants and therefore by placing themselves firmly astride the collective movements precisely in the post-war years following the first and second world war ... they played a role that could not be imagined outside of the great political and social modernisation processes of the twentieth century. (2011: 9)

Therefore, mafia is *part* of modernisation, not a hindrance to it, capitalising, for instance, on policies such as the 1950s agrarian reform (see 3.2.1). ‘It’ is modern and flexible. Santino tackles what he characterises the ‘pseudo-dilemma’ of Cosa Nostra’s ‘unicity’ or ‘plurality’ (whether it is a monolithic organisation or a network), seeing these as integrated concepts (2007: 13). Movement of capital, resources and people constructs this integration across organisations and borders, as the mafia’s internal centralisation and external fluidity is a relational networking system (Armao 2009: 47).

Many contemporary authors, then, refuse the depiction of mafia as a symptomatic survival of a ‘traditional’ past, proposing, rather, that the mafia bourgeoisie integrated Sicilian capitalism into world markets – e.g. the rich *Conca d’Oro* was the mafia’s cradle in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Dickie 2004: 102–06; Santino 1995; 2007). However, Lupo goes further, here dissociating his position from that of Arlacchi to reject the ‘archaic/entrepreneurial’, Old Mafia/New Mafia divide itself as a:

... naïve, all-inclusive model of modernisation [that] relegates culture, clientele and blood family ties to the traditional world, placing in the world of the present ‘impersonal organisation’, while instead the problem lies in understanding the complex interactions that exist, past and present, between the former elements and the latter institution. (2011: 23)

Following Lupo, my work on cooperatives diverges from the simplistic ‘modernisation’ paradigm that counterposes ‘tradition’ (kinship) to ‘change’ (law, meritocracy). On the contrary, I show that kinship bonds encourage change, while, conversely, transformative processes solidify continuities in local codes.

The role of the state, and the nature of different groups’ engagement with it, has been a key aspect of this social change. In Blok’s account, ‘mafia developed ... when the modern state superimposed itself on a marginal peasant society which was still largely feudal in its basic structures’ (1974: 6–7). More generally, my account of the contemporary situation draws on Blok’s account of ‘configurations of power’:

The concept of configuration emphasizes the changing patterns of interdependencies in which individuals and groups of individuals are involved: both as allies and as opponents. The locus of change is not extraneous to the configuration. Change evolves from the built-in tensions and polarities between the elements that form the configuration. (1974: 9)

Analysing the interdependencies between antimafia ideology, the peasant movement, cooperativism and the state (a configuration, *sensu* Blok), I focus on the tensions among them. The current pattern of configuration is state action against the mafia. While there were many complexities involved, in how this came about, briefly it can be said that the escalation of mafia violence surpassed the state's (varying) degrees of tolerance. The state's shift from a *de facto* policy of collusion to active antimafia intervention thus marks a discontinuity in the mid-1990s (see also 3.2.5). For Schneider and Schneider, one factor was that the end of the Cold War de-valued Cosa Nostra's role as a bulwark against communism in Sicily (2003: 4). The decline of the DC's political class, intertwined with mafia for decades, was a further factor (Ginsborg 2003b: 201–03). Even so, it is notable that the shift to antimafia intervention was anomalous in the 1990s context of neoliberal rollback of the state action in Italy and Europe (see also analyses from the USSR, where the collapse of the state contributed to mafia expansion (Volkov 2002; Glenny 2009; Varese 2011)). The Italian state's move to radical state interventionism thus stands out as exceptional within the wider political context the forces of opposition to the mafia had been long developing.

Overall, I aim to challenge the totalising identification of Sicily with the mafia, using antimafia cooperatives to discuss change, in a site where consensus with violent brokerage and patronage practices of *mafiosi* has been prominent. Recent accounts recognise a history of relatively grassroots dissent to mafia activity (Behan 2008; Moroni 2010). A number of authors have, since the mid-1990s, identified Sicily as a 'site of change', reflecting on current processes of social transformation observed when integrating



ethnography and history (Davis 1996; 1998; Schneider and Schneider 1996; 2006). Constructing new engagements with the state, antimafia cooperatives participants tackle a mafia both 'traditional' and 'modern', in the configuration of locality and state, reflecting on participants' different ideas. However differentiated, these engagements involve changes in material processes, an undertheorised aspect in the discussion on the antimafia.

The focus on 'civic education' and 'moral reform' has itself been hegemonic in current analyses of the 'new' antimafia movement. Schneider and Schneider's monograph, focused on late 1990s Palermo, follows the civil society mobilisation known as 'the Palermitan spring'; 'educating for legality' in order to design sound citizens, became the antimafia movement's major contribution to local civic life (Schneider and Schneider 2003: 260–90). Sociologists prioritised institutional change as the key input to drag society away from mafia (Girolamo 2009), while popular mobilisations have been theorised as ways in which people manifested their 'civic duty' on the streets (Jamieson 2000). Recent culturalist approaches promote the idea that 'the culture of the mafia' can be eroded through educational reform (Gunnarson 2008). Exponents of the 'new' antimafia argue for positive engagements with the state, starkly differentiated from how the old *braccianti* saw state agents as allies with *mafiosi* (Arlacchi and Dalla Chiesa 1987). Some of these analyses take for granted the mainstream discourses on the separation between an 'old' and 'new' mafia, assuming a modernisation paradigm neatly separating tradition and change. (This is not true of Schneider and Schneider's more nuanced approach (1996; 2003), which underlines the issue of class.)

The conventional argument goes like this: the starting assumption is that the 'agrarian roots' and 'primordial spirit' of the old mafia (Arlacchi 1986) configured a rural antimafia movement based on 'livelihoods'. However now, as *mafiosi* are entrepreneurs in their own right, no longer acting as the *longa manus* of landowners, civic education is the focus of antimafia, guided by an enlightened urban 'civil society' (Giorgio and Cento Bull

2005; Orlando 2003). Seeing political movements as moral politics, however, cannot fully account for the agrarian moral economies they inspire (Edelman 2001), as I shall argue in the case of antimafia agrarian cooperatives.

My own research is premised (although not exclusively) on recognising the importance of livelihoods and access to material resources. This is not only where the contemporary antimafia movement has made its most tangible contribution but was also a focus of historical struggles of Sicilian peasants. I emphasise that, for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the antimafia movement came together as a class mobilisation of the landless and land-poor against mafia brokerage and patronage (see Chapter 3). At the same time, the differentiation between civil society discourse and materially oriented politics corresponds, as my work delineates, to the two-tiered division of labour in the cooperatives, where Palermitan middle-class administrators pursue antimafia principles, while local peasants appear less engaged with this discourse. This parallels Schneider and Schneider's analysis of the antimafia movement as an agglomeration of diverse civil society interests (urban and middle class) whose moral and educational reform projects met a degree of resistance from working-class Palermitans: city's labour market was conditioned by the mafia, seen as an employer-patron who 'put food on the table' (2003: 314, fn 10).

This also connects to insights that the antimafia movement, since the 1980s, shifted its focus 'from class struggle to civic duty' (Santino 2000; Bolzoni 1998), or 'from peasant to urban wars' (Schneider and Schneider 1997). An influential figure in the antimafia movement, Sciascia, saw this drift of attention away from livelihoods as lined to the 'professionalisation' of the movement, causing some outrage when he characterised magistrates who had played a leading part in mafia prosecution, as 'antimafia professionals' (Sciascia 1987). Schneider and Schneider examine the contradictions between Sciascia's antimafia and the 'new, urban, educated, left-wing antimafia' (1998: 245–59). Comparably, Sampson notes how anti-corruption became a 'grant category' in Eastern Europe: the

rhetoric of NGO ‘warriors of integrity’ mobilised a discourse of ‘projectualisation’ oriented to funding mechanisms triggered by market-oriented catchphrases (2005: 103–05). More generally, accounting for social change should not be limited to morally driven discourses inspired by NGOs as socially transformative processes often stem from production and labour (Harvey 2011). Santino notes that the ‘failures’ of the antimafia movement were due to its downplaying of class and exploitation (2000). This highlights the limitations of the movement’s voice precisely *because* it separated livelihoods from civic duty, identifying antimafia commitment as ‘a choice’ of people, with which they engage in their leisure time. At the same time, ‘conditioning and provisioning’ for working class and peasants was – as will be explored – a channel for *mafiosi*’s consensus and continuity (Schneider and Schneider 2003: 311–17; also 2005b).

My work seeks to fulfil the need for a study of change in Sicily predicated on work provision and material processes: instead of moral reform, examining a production-based antimafia mobilisation. Gledhill notes that conflict is ‘about control of historicity’, citing Touraine’s words that social movements are ‘the work that society performs on itself, struggling about greater participation in the state (2000: 188). The antimafia cooperatives, channelling social transformation based on production-based processes, reflect this point. My research contributes a study of the antimafia from *below* and *within*. Exploring the lives of people whose livelihoods are linked to the struggle against mafia influence in Sicily, positively engaging with the state, I inquire into the transformative experience this involvement means for their livelihoods, examining an antimafia rearranging access to material resources.

These are all strong reasons for moving the focus of inquiry away from civil society and onto people’s livelihoods. In the end, however, the strongest reason comes from the ethnographic evidence of my research itself. Although to an extent cooperatives are an imposed, top-down movement, the active changes they brought to people’s livelihoods is

an empirical novelty; thus what I propose is a modest paradigm shift. This approach actively tackles the ‘old/new’ antimafia discontinuity and demonstrates continuities with the antimafia peasant movement’s historical past.

## **2.2. Cooperatives and Cooperativisms**

### **2.2.1. Cooperatives and institutions, legal and economic**

Cooperatives in the modern sense were born in England, after the industrial revolution; the first was established in Rochdale in 1844 (Webb 1912). The Rochdale paradigm distinguishes cooperativism from previous ventures that involved cooperation (Zangheri et al. 1987). It could only develop in an industrial division of labour (cooperation between differentiated tasks) and class differentiation (Durkheim 1997). Modern cooperatives, therefore, are expressions of workers’ organisation seeking equity in the workplace and direct management of production. They often can be traced back to political projects. The cooperative movement’s equality-pursuing project was a reaction against the institutionalisation of charity in the form of the 1834 New Poor Law, famously criticised by Polanyi (2001: 82). The movement, drawing on mutuality and self-help, counteracted the idea of the ‘undeserving poor’, aimed to bridge class differences and involved community participation in local economies, often as an alternative to the hierarchies of waged labour (Taylor 2011: 240; Nash et al. 1974). Therefore, workers’ management, mutuality among members, community participation and tackling the capital/labour dichotomy are the main characteristics of cooperatives.

There are two notable features of workers’ cooperativism in Alto Belice; although they are not unique to Alto Belice they are contingent on the specificities of the antimafia political project. Firstly, antimafia cooperativism arose not as an alternative to wage labour but *from its absence*: where agricultural jobs existed, they were subject to the harsh terms of mafia patronage and were never regulated by labour rights. Antimafia cooperatives followed a very pragmatic strategy, offering employment to poor, petty producers. The

priority was not to counter wage labour but to set conditions of production and remuneration. Indeed, the main link pulling the antimafia cooperatives together is wage labour. Secondly, the ‘capitalist’, in Alto Belice, is *the state*, which grants access to the means of production (land, machinery) and through them to work, to the members of social cooperatives. As noted in 1.1.2, state rhetoric presented this process as the ‘restitution of land to the community’ (Frigerio and Pati 2007: 2). Thus, the state, as owner and gatekeeper of ‘communal’ land, endows cooperatives with decommodified land and crafts an ideological model for cooperativism.

This land has been withdrawn from market and has no exchange value, as it does not partake in commodified transactions. It is ‘given’ to the cooperatives to safeguard it, remaining inalienable (Weiner 1992); like special-purpose money, it is ‘earmarked’ (Zelizer 1997), endowed with a particular kind of (political) role. At the same time, labour, the other main resource antimafia cooperatives allow locals to access, also changes form, wrested from the mafia as the state seizes control over jobs. While there is a resemblance to classic state collectivism (Humphrey 1983), in Alto Belice, this state-driven project that decommodifies land and offers job protectionism is taking place in neoliberal times, in the face of broader deregulation and state roll-back (Castells 2011).

This brief discussion also relates to my overall argument about the distinctive relationship of cooperatives to law. Cooperativism aims to produce horizontal relations in the workplace (see below) and supersede the capital/labour distinction, not via direct government control of the means of production but, rather, through collective management by autonomous workers. Yet, it is evidently not an anarchist project. As Mauss emphasised, cooperativists see a role for the state in providing a legal environment that makes such associationism viable, or that even encourages it; they seek to accomplish ‘a state within the state’ (Mauss 1905 cited in Fournier 2006: 126). In Alto Belice, the state not only provides a legal framework for cooperatives but *owns* the decommodified land and

promotes their establishment through a law-governed process, in the face of neoliberalism, aiming to ‘amend the community’s relation to the law and legality’ (Conorzio 2010).

I historicise this discussion in Chapter 3, discussing the specific configuration of cooperativism and legislative history from which antimafia cooperatives grew: the orientation of the Sicilian left towards legality and the related ‘revolutionary legalism’ tradition. The reason for choosing the cooperative form to accommodate confiscated land was because it was seen as representing of community participation (Smith 2006; Hart et al. 2011: 15), as well as instituting equal relations between different classes in the workplace, equity of work tasks and equivalence in pay. In Alto Belice, the conjuncture of state (protecting decommodified land), fair labour market and community participation is the basic condition for the cooperatives. However, this thesis will nuance this scheme, illuminating the specificities of their internal divisions of labour.

This conjuncture reveals the plurality of cooperativist economic practice. Since Malinowski (1922) and Mauss (1922), anthropologists have denaturalised the Western hegemonic paradigm (see Polanyi on Malinowski: 2001: 50) that the economy is an ‘autonomous’ sphere forming a potentially globalised total system (Hann and Hart 2011: 162). Anthropologists also criticise totalising models, suggesting instead that capitalism or socialism are labels that describe ‘what makes an economy historically distinctive, but remain merely references to just part of what goes on in an economy’ (Hart et al. 2011: 5).

For example, Graeber notes that:

... the market is a model created by isolating certain principles within a complex system (in this case by fixing on a certain form of immediate, balanced, impersonal, self-interested transactions – what we call ‘commercial exchange’, which is almost never found in isolation but always surrounded by and drawing on other logics – hierarchical, communistic ...) and then creating a totalising model within which the books all balance and all debts and credits ultimately cancel one another out. No such bounded entity could ever exist, either in time or in space. (2009a: 131–32)

The 2008 financial crisis rejuvenated interest in the longstanding debate on the multiple range of human economic practice (Hart et al. 2011: 2), including aspects of mutuality in the market (Gudeman 2009: 26). This condition demands a nuanced approach to the idea that state and market are opposed to each other, as neoliberal discourse argues (Carrier 1997). In this direction, anti-utilitarian approaches have developed, opting for a Maussian holistic perspective on economy (e.g. *La Revue du M.A.U.S.S.*), as well as explorations of ‘solidarity economy’ (*économie solidaire*) (Godbout and Caillé 1998; Defourny et al. 2000). This tendency emphasises the multiple characteristics of an economic system and also relates to cooperativists’ critique of mainstream economics. According to Graeber, Mauss, as cooperativist and anthropologist, ‘felt that existing popular practices provided the basis both for a moral critique of capitalism and possible glimpses of what future society would be like’ (2004: 18).

This does not exclude relationships to markets, an enduring aim of cooperativism, but guarantees cooperatives an often distinctive position within capitalism. They form mutuality enclaves of moral economy, that, interestingly, are used by a community in relation to a market in ways often detrimental to other participants in that same market (Gudeman 2008: 103). In Alto Belice, the Consortium’s allegiance to antimafia principles excludes those affiliated to mafia from access to confiscated land and, through that, to labour. Defining what *is* the community – and thereby excluding others from access to land and work – is crucial in my research, as cooperative members entertained differing ideas on what constitutes community, which informed different moral economies within the cooperatives.

Sitrin appropriates the term ‘horizontalism’ (*horizontalidad*), an emic expression used by member-workers in cooperatives at the ‘recuperated’ factories in Argentina to describe workers’ democracy and community participation (2006). The principle of horizontalism, compatible with different types of cooperatives, interacts with the complex relationships to

law and morality that develop among cooperative participants. Horizontalism is an aim for Sicilian antimafia cooperatives, although, in Argentina, workers' coops often operated at the margins of legality (Klein 2007). In my ethnography, the antimafia struggle engages with positive legislation and is dissimilar to movements that 'reclaim the state' (Hainwright 2003), whereas in Argentina, legality is merely a pivot for activists' moral claims. This is evident in Brazilian squatters' ambiguous relationships with the law (Holston 1989) or the landless movement MST balances among tolerated illegality, legal impunity (Wright and Volford 2003: 290–307) and state support (Nugent and Vincent 2006: 346; for squats bordering on illegality see Bey 2008).

### **2.2.2. Cooperatives and divisions of labour**

Cooperatives are mostly guided by horizontalism in organising labour but nonetheless operate with internal divisions, as is the case with antimafia cooperativism. I argue that cooperative organisation, drawing on relations between community and economy, often becomes a channel for experimentation inspired by regionalism and political ideologies, which are the source of such internal divisions. My work is particularly attentive to the respective moralities attached to these divisions. Accounting for the oft-noted shift of cooperatives from being orientated as horizontally organised work associations to acquiring hierarchised divisions of labour, authors identify two different, but interrelated, external influences, coming from institutions: authoritative political (usually state) ideologies and/or competitive markets. I shall discuss them here and show why developments in Alto Belice cooperatives are somewhat different.

The widely discussed Basque cooperativist experiment in Mondragón initially positioned itself against totalising systems: it was 'a reaction against -isms', especially Taylorist specialisation and division of labour. Workers referred to Machado's verse: 'the path is made walking' (*se hace el camino al andar*) to convey their pragmatism (Whyte and Whyte 1991: 257). In that way, 'cooperativism was true socialism – not just one way to



achieve it' (1991: 253). Eventually, the idea that Mondragón's complex of cooperatives had to be 'more closely integrated if it was to compete effectively in the European common market' (1991: 201) led to the restructuring of the organisation of labour, imposing hierarchisations in lieu of horizontal relations. Sharryn Kasmir characterises these transformations as 'middle class reforms' (1996: 63–91).

In post-war Italy, the protection of cooperatives was enshrined in the Constitution (1947) as a 'third way' between liberalism and collectivism and between state and market (Paolucci 2005). When the Constitution was being created, communists suggested that cooperative property should be the only property form recognised (Sassoon 1997: 209–12). Cooperatives thus enjoyed a welcoming political atmosphere and were encouraged by affiliations with mainstream political parties (Bonfante 1981). During the 1970s, cooperative representatives developed relationships with local authorities that boosted the 'Italian economic miracle', evident in 'communist-leaning' Emilia, alongside the familial enterprise-based 'Third Italy'<sup>2</sup> development scheme (Bagnasco 1984; 1979; Bagnasco and Sabel 1995). Emilia's 'red cooperativism' has been seen as the adoption of political ideologies on (horizontal) organisation in production, counterposed to Veneto's 'catholic political culture' and associated 'white' cooperativism (Trigilia 1986; 2002). The cooperative movement radically transformed local economies, weaving community with economic practice (Thornley 1981; Oakeshot 1978; Thompson 1991) and achieving 'worker control in action' (Dow 2003: 67–82). This condition modelled 'industrial democracy' according to internal horizontal work relations and solidified relations between community and workplace (Holmström 1989). Socialist ideologies inspired workers' management, emphasising 'solidarity' and equity in work relations as cooperativism's fundamental principle (Macpherson 2008).

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<sup>2</sup> Anthropologists have cast doubt on this term (e.g. Yanagisako 2002, Ghezzi 2007).

In recent Italian cooperativist developments, ‘solidarity’ has given way to ‘mutuality’ as the dominant, organising discourse, as cooperatives seek to open up to global market opportunities (Zamagni and Felice 2006; Zamagni and Zamagni 2010). As in Mondragòn, ‘cooperative networks’ formed in Central Italy involved policy-making and inter-cooperative cooperation (Bulgarelli and Viviani 2006: 96–100; Sapelli 2006). Admittedly, this was not without tensions: social solidarity and market-orientation have always been entangled in cooperativism (Degl’Innocenti 2003). Early on in the movement’s development, cooperativism’s main organisational issue was to maintain equality as the priority while also being focused on growth (Bonfante 1981; Bartlett 1993). Equally, the criss-crossing between subsidiary policies towards the cooperative system and the administration of ‘coop-entrenched municipalities’ has been continuous since the 1970s (Pugliese and Rebeggiani 2004). The institutionalisation of cooperatives and exposure to markets affected horizontal work relations. For this reason, Burawoy (1991) characterised cooperatives as ephemeral organisations, unable to withstand tendencies towards bureaucratisation and hierarchies.

The literature on how cooperatives move from horizontal to hierarchical organisations, rich as it is, often fails to engage with the differentiated viewpoints and practices within hierarchised cooperatives. Discussions of hierarchisation do not explain how opinions and practices are manifested in (and informed by) *cooperative members’ moralities* (an issue overlooked, in varying degrees, by many key writers: e.g. Kasmir 1996; Sapelli 2006; Zamagni and Zamagni 2010; Holmström 1989; Macpherson 2008.) Moralities and ideologies operative among the workforce are especially significant for an anthropological approach to the division of labour in order to nuance the idea of hierarchisation and the division of labour itself, as well as to discover how people experience this tendency away from horizontalism. It would be simplistic to see the division of labour as (just) ‘management impositions’ *within* a cooperative’s structure; often, these internal

differentiations are informed by aspects of members' lives *outside* the cooperative framework.

This is a main point of this thesis. The sociological analysis of cooperatives is committed to showing how they become internally differentiated, without elucidating in detail what this differentiation entails for coop members. The diverse opinions and moral stances intertwined with their division of labour often remain undertheorised. My ethnography not only sheds light on these nuanced differentiations in terms of *moralties* but also argues that this division is often constructed by different viewpoints among the workforce, and reproduces them accordingly. Therefore, while, in the literature, specialisation and division of labour arise because of cooperatives' exposure to competitive markets and conservative state ideologies (see below), in Alto Belice it is, rather, a tension between the Consortium's normative idea and participants' different concepts of community (as well as their embeddedness in different social relations) that is the main axis for internal differentiations. Cooperativism is (as described above) *contextual*, shaped by the configurations of power at a given historical moment. In that respect (as I will argue in the next chapter), it is a 'modular' notion, *sensu* Benedict Anderson (2006): the principles of cooperativism, instilled in the context of mafia-controlled agrarian production, developed in very specific forms in Sicily, as vectors of antimafia mobilisation. In the context of post-2000 Alto Belice, antimafia cooperativism came to entail a commitment to legality, which, as the ethnography will show, created tensions in its adaptations to the local situatedness of members. Cooperative administrators set out to apply the principle of *antimafia cooperativism* – which eventually contributed to making (internally differentiated) *antimafia cooperatives*.

While Holmström recommends a comparative approach, considering regional characteristics of community-based Central-Italian and Catalonian cooperativisms (1993; cf. Bartlett 1992, for another comparison), comparisons should be made with caution. As ethnographic accounts of Catalonia make evident, apart from competitive markets,

autocratic regimes may have an impact on horizontal relations within cooperatives, and on the ways cooperatives interact with the community in which they operate. In that context, what Narotzky calls ‘the political economy of affects’ (2004: 57–82) – claims to friendship, community idioms and family relations – served to sustain, but therefore maintain, workers in their precarious job situation. The ‘glue’ holding this set of work relations together was (also) a vision of cooperativism stemming from a conservative regime: ‘... the Catalan way is workers’ cooperatives: an “imagined community” of social relations of production, an ideology of harmony between capital and labour through national identity’ (Narotzky 1997: 187). Catalonian regionalism instrumentalised cooperativism, identifying in the co-articulation of *casa* (the family unit) and *cooperativa* (the unit of labour) local expressions of the nation’s unity (Narotzky 1988). This corporatism deployed ‘a hegemonic cultural concept that consistently glosses over differentiation and conflict, and pictures a history of cooperation, common objectives and non-existent class struggle’ (Narotzky 1997: 119). Gavin Smith also identifies such tendencies: regulations governing Spanish cooperatives made an already informalized economy more informal (1999: 179). Nevertheless, there have been other cooperativism experiences, as per the Catalonian Republican industrial colonies (Terradas 1979), while anarchist cooperativism also developed earlier, in mid-1930s Andalusia (Mintz 2004).

In the relevant literature, therefore, there are divergences from horizontalism (equal work relations as in principles of industrial democracy) when an idea (e.g. socialism) about the wellbeing of the community becomes the main priority of the common economic endeavour. Divisions of labour inspired by market-oriented specialisation and corporatist relations diverted the historical role of cooperativism away from tackling the labour/capital conflict (Smith 2006). Marx, interestingly, criticised but did not condemn the cooperative movement. He saw, in its bridging of capital and labour, firstly, a preliminary victory of the political economy of the latter over the former and, secondly, ‘the husks of the old system

and the seeds of the new' (Bottomore 1991: 111). However, for that victory to be complete, political power and not localism was required. His interest in cooperativism was therefore underpinned by a dialectical relationship among state, society and market. For Marx, cooperatives are founded upon a historical contradiction:

The cooperative factories run by workers themselves are, within the old form, the first examples of the emergence of a new form, even though they naturally reproduce in all cases, all the defects of the existing system, and must reproduce them. But the opposition between capital and labour is abolished here, even if at first only in the form that the workers in association become their own capitalist, i.e. they use the means of production to valorise their own labour. These factories show how, at a certain stage of development of the material forces of production, and of the social forms of production corresponding to them, a new form of production develops and is formed naturally out of the old. (Inaugural Address, MECW 6: 78, cited in Bottomore 1981: 571)

Mauss' appreciation for the cooperative movement presents a slightly different aspect: while Marx saw in cooperatives the dialectics of present contradictions and the seed of future developments, a kind of future-present, Mauss, actively involved in cooperativism himself (Hart 2007: 5), insisted that consumer cooperatives brought about 'practical socialism' (Fournier 2006: 125). Economic experiments were thus not imagined or planned but *experienced*, in radical cooperativism (as per Mondragòn case, above). Speaking before the First National and International Congress of Socialist Cooperatives (in July of 1900), Mauss stated:

... we will educate him [the citizen] for his revolutionary task by giving him a sort of foretaste of all the advantages that the future society will be able to offer him...we will create a veritable arsenal of socialist capital in the midst of bourgeois capital. (cited in Graeber 2001: 151)

Durkheim himself, described as 'a kind of guild socialist' (Morris 2005; Thompson 2012: 31), also shared similar views, regarding cooperatives associations striving for social justice.

The radical horizontalist kind of cooperative environment described by Mauss is conducive to liberation from waged work (encouraging, in turn, greater citizenship

participation). However, as I have already mentioned, Sicily was exceptional in that, political cooperativism inspired by antimafia, far from abolishing agricultural wage labour, instead *created* it (albeit in a regulated form). This might seem like ethnographically documented cases where cooperatives played a ‘salvage’ role for jobs: recalling Sitrin’s findings on the Argentine crisis (2006) or narratives of Eastern German cooperatives in the neoliberal 1990s (Buechler and Buechler 2002; Bauerkämper 2004) and post-Soviet collectives, where familial and gendered solidarity were reinforced by memories of a state sense of collectivity (Ashwin 1999; Humphrey 1998). But the Alto Belice case is distinct from these examples too, as the antimafia cooperatives *created* jobs, in the absence of a viable labour market, and indeed in the midst of neoliberal market fundamentalism, which proclaims ‘salvation from government’ (Brown 1997). More precisely, as explained in Chapter 5 and alluded to in the vignette opening this thesis, although there *was* agrarian waged labour in Alto Belice before the cooperatives – it was always unregulated, rare and exploitative, part of the informal economy’s local networks, mostly controlled by mafia. The cooperatives did not eliminate this (see 5.3) but added regulated work to the setting. Cooperatives in this context, where mafia patrons have historically determined the labour market, are simultaneously viable alternatives to the paradigm of the ‘autonomy’ of the economy *and* manifestations of capitalism’s contradictions.

I shall show, however, that it was the antimafia principles themselves that rendered these cooperatives amenable to hierarchies. The antimafia cooperativism principle promoted by the state was that bestowing the use of confiscated land on cooperatives ‘recuperates land to the community, reconstituting a communal use of land’ (Libera 2010a; Consorzio 2010). I shall suggest that this principle, imposed in the Consortium’s normative language, and external to ways locals lived their lives before the project, influenced the antimafia cooperatives’ horizontalism, eventually contributing to the creation of internal divisions. This situation was also informed by the different ideas local coop members

themselves held about state, community, kinship and mafia itself. Antimafia cooperativism's strict legalism, aiming to dissociate the cooperatives from certain aspects of local community and tradition, created contradictions on the ground that affected the cooperatives' development.

The case of the antimafia cooperatives brings together the contrasting views of Marx and Mauss. The Maussian perspective is that cooperatives become vectors for people's lived practice, models of economic activity that offer alternatives to hierarchies of power in labour relations. Cooperativism arose historically to combat wage labour, and the associated division of labour, with the aim of correcting the resultant social inequalities. But it was also a response, already since Rochdale, to markets for labour (in the case of Sicily, conditioned by mafia) that often left people without jobs. It developed, often on moral grounds, drawing on ideas of 'community', regionalism, and communalism. The fact that antimafia cooperatives do not defy the state but involve positive engagements with it also confirms the Marxian critique outlined above. In that respect, their horizontalism is framed in dynamic configurations 'between' the market and state policy; it becomes a struggle for different values, which has been seen as 'communalism' (De Angelis 2007).

'Cooperatives' is then not a self-explanatory term but one claimed and contested by varied groups, associated with different political and ideological allegiances, and formed as a response to different problems and needs. They arise in relation to a broad range of ideals and actors, from state to social movements, from fascist to communist or anarchist ideologies. They are often outcomes of top-down planning rather than grassroots initiatives or experiences – not divorced from the local context but not derived from it either. Market structures and political ideas imposed from 'outside', shape and are shaped by members' everyday work experience and social relations. This also takes place in the Alto Belice cooperatives I discuss. Cooperativism is, I suggest historically in Chapter 3 and ethnographically in the remainder of the thesis, a 'modular' notion, borrowing the term

from Anderson's conceptualisation of nationalism (2006). Apart from the contingent characteristics of cooperatives, my work builds on the idea that there are *many* cooperativisms and not *a* single cooperativism: divisions of labour within cooperatives imply different ideas on what type of moralities (and moral economies) different cooperative members across the work teams of a cooperative strive for.

## **2.3. State, Land and Community: From Imagination to Practice**

### **2.3.1. The unintended consequences of state activity**

Looking at cooperatives that have a political agenda, a good part of my research is committed to tracing the meaning of the state in people's everyday lives: how different engagements with 'it' were negotiated. While cooperatives at large, as discussed, promise the creative weaving of economy and community, the Consortium's regulations involved confused ideas about the meanings of community. Anderson's work on nationalism, and particularly his notion of 'imagined communities' (2006) has been a source of inspiration for a number of anthropologists' approaches to the state. I follow Anderson in tracing the imagined projection of the community's interests in the state, as expressed in the rhetoric of the Consortium, and the way this inspired the cooperatives' administration members and determined their practices.

Many anthropologists argue that it is difficult to study 'the' state ('an illusory general interest') without reifying abstract structures as actual social relationships (Fuller and Bènèi 2001: 2–5). Herzfeld sees the conceptual separation of state and people as stemming from the Western ideology of 'transcendence', and its 'separating [of] eternal truths from the mere contingencies of society and culture'; this symbolic construct is then liable to reification (Herzfeld 1993: 19; 2005). Abrahams proposes that anthropologists should treat the popular *idea* of the state as an object of analysis in its own right (1998: 75–79). I read this proposal alongside Ferguson and Gupta's suggestion that states are



themselves composed of bundles of social practices, ‘every bit as local’ in their social situatedness and materiality as any other practice’ (1997: 15).

Asad proposed studying the ‘abstract’ state institution by looking at it as an ‘imaginative’ structure, to which powers are delegated (Asad 2004: 279–89). Earlier, Gupta suggested that the state is ‘imagined’ through a ‘discursive construction’ (Gupta 1995). Among discursive approaches popular in the anthropology of the state since then, Hansen and Stepputat’s proposal is useful. The authors suggest approaching each actual state as a historically specific configuration of ‘a range of languages of stateness’ (2001: 3–37), including ‘the codification of social relations in law’ (2001: 16). I take this view on board, assessing the parameters that constructed landed property legislation and its imposition on the ground. Rather than arguing that law enforcement should become a prism through which the state is ‘imagined’, however, I focus on the consequences of the cooperative administrators’ imaginative identification of the community’s wellbeing with the state. I then explore the tangible results of state intervention in my research interlocutors’ lives. In that way, my ethnographic stress on the land confiscations (from mafia) brings out the issue of material transformations taking place through the application of law.

Steinmetz emphasises that the process of ‘state-formation’, involving law, is ongoing (1999: 9). Approaching law as a processual category is key here. Locating the state in the process of legislative production and its socially configured continuities, i.e. the consequences of laws for people’s lives, is one useful ‘bottom-up’ way of research (legal theory itself points to ‘recognition’ as a vital axis for law, see Hart 1997). I acknowledge this is equally open to reification, as it might treat the law as an artefact (Wastell 2007: 68). Instead, it should be seen as a process, as ‘the law and the social context in which it operates must be inspected together’ (Moore 2000: 55; Moore 2005) to capture the ‘life of the law’ (Nader 2009). The processual approach of legal anthropologists thus incorporates legal artefacts in dialectics of ‘repotentialisation, in which the formative design of the

artefact is always hostage to the evaluation of the performance of the artefact' (Mundy and Pottage 2004: 24).

Anthropologists have stressed that legal categories in non-western contexts have often puzzling effects (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006). Some of my informants displayed ambivalent relationships to the law and stood 'at the frontiers of legality' (Harris 1996: 2). In fact, the degree to which informants were sufficiently socialised 'into' the law reflected their differentiated identification with antimafia cooperativist principles. My research addresses law in the integrated process of the (socially informed) lawmaking and the (socially arranged) products of the law, the intricacies of law's material consequences, which are often unintended and go against the legislators' planning. I consider this process to be a continuum between the law's inception, application and grounded results, which include all sorts of consequences. My work elucidates the unintended consequences of the state's jural codification and legal production. In Sicily, diverse voices initially proposed the law on the 'social use' of confiscated resources (Libera 2008a; Pati 2010). The enactment of this law (number 109/96) led to tensions between jural and moral interpretations, as it brought about unexpected contextual arrangements (explored regarding land in Chapter 6). Since the state is rooted in human agency, addressing only its successes would limit the scope of analysis. Instead, bringing out the unplanned consequences of state activity helps demystify 'its' study; the results of the state's unplanned actions are as important as its successes (Scott 1998). Part of this situation is that the 'peopled' state's legitimacy is interactively built from below (Herzfeld 1993; 2005), as people on the ground accept the legal system even as they manipulate aspects of it. I then identify the state both *in* and *by* the unexpected and planned manifestations of its activity.

Discussing the 'peopled' state in Sicily raises the issue of corruption, due to the ongoing complicity in different levels of state power with mafia and due to the moralising discourses articulated around the antimafia, which tackle this complicity (the 'moral

question’, as discussed in 1.2.1). Corruption has been seen as a way people negotiate, claim and ‘imagine’ the state (but also as ‘a threat to democracy’, as per Della Porta and Mény 1997). Gupta proposes that the narratives of corruption that ‘produce the state’ are important means of social cohesion in India (Gupta 2005: 173–76, cited in Haller and Shore 2005: 16–17). Research from Indian contexts underlines how the ‘informal economy of the state’ (seemingly ‘corrupt’ services provided to peasants) is in fact embedded in the local moral economy (Shah 2010: 71–73). Peasants ‘hold the state hostage’ through ‘coercive subordination’ by reconstituting political relationships initially characterised by social distance in personalised patronage idioms (Osella and Osella 2001: 152–55). Alexander’s argument that Turkish workers, negotiating access to resources, see the state institution as their ‘personal state’ is also akin to this debate (2002). In African contexts, the state becomes the object of multiple practices of reappropriation and ‘ways of doing’, while a ‘rhizome’ of personalised relationships links the lowest with the highest, through patronage (Bayart 2009: 208–09; 219). The notion of ‘low politics’ in Italy can be associated with Bayart’s ‘patronage’ (Ginsborg 2003a: 210).

In Alto Belice, antimafia cooperatives instigated a series of different local discourses about the state, detached from ‘corruption narratives’. These were mostly removed from the salient discourse in the progressive media against Berlusconi, in power at the time of fieldwork. My informants very rarely identified ‘the state’ with Berlusconi, a quintessential figure embodying corruption in European politics (Lane 2010). In other words, they entertained popular *ideas* of the state (in Asad’s sense) related to locally beneficial legislation rather than general state power. Moreover, the above ethnographies frame patronage as a bottom-up activity, which ‘personalises’ the state. I take them on board to discuss the idioms of job recruitment in the antimafia cooperatives; however, while kinship is central in the above conceptualisations of patronage, bridging households with middlemen to reach power, my ethnography treats patronage differently. My

informants identified patronage (an act they considered immoral) as the hiring of workers in the cooperatives who were *not* kin-related to an existing cooperative member, but linked instead through particular politics affiliations (see 4.3.1). I also show that the interactions between grounded experience and state activity were premised on local discourse about the ‘state’s presence’ and appropriations of local discourse (gossip) by the police (7.2.2).

The languages of stateness, the discourse produced by the state (Hansen and Stepputat 2001), influenced everyday life, imposing what Consortium agents called ‘standardisation’. This standardisation entailed framing people’s practices in a legislated value system that implied dissociating people’s cooperative activity from unregulated practices in the community, notably informal work. However, in Alto Belice, informal labour (*lavoro nero*) and corresponding moral stances on land plots (which sat alongside their legal statuses, as ex-mafia properties) remained pertinent even after the new legal relations of land and labour established in relation to the cooperatives. Antimafia cooperativism introduced (and imposed) a legalised categorisation of land plots and a legalist approach to labour, in order to dissociate them from a tradition of informal work relations and mafia landownership. ‘Standardisation’ implied that, for cooperative members, all work was regularised as ‘employment’ and mafia landownership was recast as state-owned landed property. However, as I show, this imposition failed to entirely replace local arrangements and perceptions of land and labour through the lens of morality and community.

Indeed, the normativity that standardisation sought to impose produced some awkward results. As Ferguson notes for the World Bank in Lesotho, the institution’s reports used a rating system premised on a ‘discursive normativity’ detached from local experience, which eventually produced contradictory results (1994: 30). In Sicily, the state’s discursive normativity, creating new property statuses for land, produced instead unexpected contiguities between mafia and antimafia actors. The confiscations law

attempted to create sharp mafia/antimafia boundaries, further marginalising local *mafiosi* from control over resources.

In fact, the effect was to create contiguities between ex-mafia plots controlled by the cooperatives and plots still in the hands of *mafiosi* or their families, which, in turn led to further results contrary to the state's intention of lessening cooperative members' contacts with *mafiosi* (Chapter 6). While cooperative principles sought to physicalise mafia/antimafia demarcations, in the belief that 'margins are ... natural containers for people considered insufficiently socialised into the law...', the grounded situation was that it is not easy to 'exile' individuals, as 'lying outside the state ... like rivers, [margins] run through its body' (Das and Poole 2004: 9). The state's normative discourse produced 'uncomfortable' proximities between land plots still belonging to *mafiosi* and land plots in cooperatives' use.

The Consortium antimafia strategy entailed the dissociation of the cooperatives from their local context, separating work in the cooperatives from 'suspicious' local kinship and familial environments. The state model of antimafia cooperativism, pursued by the Consortium, promoted keeping home and work as separate realms, a separation often taken to be a key change with the rise of industrial capitalism (hence seen as part of modernisation) but convincingly challenged by feminist history, sociology and anthropology. The reality on the ground for antimafia *cooperatives* is different from the sociological paradigm, suggesting flows between work and home, which in turn created 'antimafia families' (as discussed in 4.2). Hareven's work is dedicated to historicising this relationship (1993; 2000), while Zelizer (2005), Goddard (1996), and Yanagisako (2002), drawing on different contexts, tackle it ethnographically, suggesting that boundaries between households and the economy are porous and complex. I problematise the relationship between kinship and work more fully in Chapters 4 and 5, while in 6.4, I briefly engage with the history of European family structures and attendant ideologies, drawing on the work of Jack Goody (1983). Goody identifies the *longue durée* of the

historical interaction between political and ‘private’ institutions, the state, marriage and kinship (understood widely, to include clanship) as a mutual relationship that defined land tenure and territorial control. This is also significant in terms of mafia, as territory, land and kinship are key concepts to conceptualise its prominence in Alto Belice.

In Sicily, after decades of an ‘absence of the state’ (Blok 1974), politics (and the antimafia movement, as described in the next chapter) developed in ways that can be compared to Lazar’s ‘citizens despite the state’ (2008). The Consortium’s confiscations, however, brought a geographically limited but radical change. Scott emphasises that when legal categories, their adjunct normative practices and state planning remain detached from local meanings, the consequences can be dire (Scott 1998; 2010). The Consortium’s idea of cooperativism can be regarded this way. Scott analyses ‘transformative state simplifications’ (1998: 4), denoting abstract planning inspired by ‘high modernist ideology’, as prone to contradictory results. He underlines how ‘formal schemes of order are untenable without some elements of the practical knowledge that they tend to dismiss’ (2010: 7); planning, while ignoring local social arrangements, was shared across different ideological systems (1998: 199). ‘Planning for abstract citizens’, often glossed in progressive rhetoric, produces realities that can hardly be predicted and are often unintended (Scott 1998: 343–47). Scott’s critique can be paralleled by Ferguson’s point that institutional discourse is ‘a practice, it is structured; [it is] not “mere” rhetoric – it has real effects, which are much more profound than simple “mystification”’ (Ferguson 1994: 18). The Consortium’s antimafia discourse can be classified as ‘abstract planning’, detached from local specifics.

My ethnography builds on this, adding one contribution: in Sicily, the legislative process is premised on an ideological dipole: on the one hand, it dissociates the cooperatives from tradition and local practices; on the other, unlike the institutions explored by Ferguson and Scott, the Italian state *does* attempt to build on certain kinship

notions (such as family and clan<sup>3</sup>), creating some of its jural categories. As the state categorisations of (mafia) family and clan are, however, carelessly drawn from local ones, contradictory consequences arise. In the next section, I engage with some theoretical debates on land and landed property, relevant to my research.

### **2.3.2. Land and property**

Legal conceptualisations of land and landscape are central to national imaginaries (Abramson 2000a: 8–10). As discussed in chapter 6, in Sicily, the ‘discursive normativity’ of the state’s kinship categories relates to land tenure. The modern theoretical premise of moving from ascribed kinship to contractual relations in accessing land (clan to market) and indeed the territorial claims of the state over land are important (Maine 2008 [1844]). There are often tensions between treating land as the essence of nation and as privately held commodity.

Polanyi has been influential in elucidating the historical role of the state in the framing of a market in land and generally of how law constructs and sustains market activity. For him, ‘the gearing of markets into a self-regulating system of tremendous power was not the result of any inherent tendency of markets towards excrescence, but rather the effect of highly artificial stimulants administered to the body social’ (2001: 60). Polanyi’s attention to the ‘fictitious’ commodification of nature as land in this process is particularly important. Laws permitting land enclosures affected the land’s value, while land (and

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<sup>3</sup> For Morgan and Engels, before the introduction of private property and the construction of the familial unit around it, the basic structure of kinship was the matrilineal clan. The work of Goody (1976; 1983; 2000) and Tillion (1983) informs my own argument on ‘clan’ land tenure and the state policy to tackle it, as it forms analogies with mafia and the antimafia confiscations, as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. Clanship has a different meaning in Goody’s discussion of landed property and family (1983). In Alto Belice, it is dramatically different, linked to mafia (see Chapters 5 and 6). Conversely, ‘family’, a unit based around the household, is linked with transmission of property matrilineally or directly to women, through the process Goody called diverging devolution (1983). Blok notes how blood imagery is evoked, in Sicily, to constitute mafia, whose main unit is ‘the family’ (2000: 87–89). In my ethnography, as discussed in Chapter 6, ‘clan’ rather than ‘family’, is the state and mass media kinship metaphor to identify a mafia coalition.

labour) formed the backbone of both legal and customary laws before enclosures, being part of social organisation under feudalism and the guild system:

Enclosures were an obvious improvement *if* no conversion to pasture took place. Enclosed land was worth double and treble the unenclosed. Where tillage was maintained, employment did not fall off, and the food supply markedly increased. The yield of the land manifestly increased, especially where the land was let. (Polanyi 2001: 36)

Land, the pivotal element in the feudal order, was the basis of the military, judicial, administrative and political system; its status and function were determined by legal and customary rules. Whether its possession was transferable or not, and if so, to whom and under what restrictions; what the rights of property entailed; to what uses some types of land must be put – all these questions were removed from the organization of buying and selling and subjected to an entirely different set of institutional regulations. (Polanyi 2001: 72–3)

In Alto Belice, integrating local connotations of land tenure into jural categories created tensions among members of cooperatives cultivating the confiscated land. Hann and Hart's (2009) volume rethinks the legacy of Polanyi through emphasising the idea of 'the commons' in the current global fervour for privatisation, while associations between 'commons' and 'community' have also been noted (Ostrom 1990; Taylor 2011: 22). These ideas are useful, as in Alto Belice state actors claim that the confiscated land is 'returned to the community', evoking a reversal of land enclosures 'appropriated unlawfully by *mafios?*' and implying a 'return to the commons' (Buğra 2007a; Milun 2010). The land's decommodified status encourages the formation of moral economy enclaves, 'islands of good' (Libera 2010a) – whose produce nevertheless participates in the market. The cooperative land as property produced is, to use Chris Hann's application of Polanyi's idea of 'embeddedness' to property shows how commodities such as land remain 'embedded' in social relations and cannot be separated from them (1998: 1). These broader social relations 'backlash' in tensions in the cooperatives' internal work relations, engendering further differentiations among members.



In Alto Belice the confiscated assets are therefore, in the eyes of many, signifiers of political cooperativism, antimafia ideology and state power – which also led to conflicts. The social arrangements around law became the site of tensions between views of the confiscated plots' 'moral ownership' and their legal classification as held in trust by the Consortium in the form of the inalienable, decommodified assets, allocated to the cooperatives. Anthropologists have noted many claims and struggles around property in legal agrarian transformations (Benda-Beckmann et al. 2009; Wiber 2010). In Brazil, the grassroots MST incorporates legalistic claims to land, pushing for the realisation of law decrees giving fair land redistribution (Gledhill 2004: 346–47; Stedile 2004), while laws responding to land claims often led to eventual misrule and ruptures (Holston 1991; 2008b). Building on the discussion in the previous section, it can be seen that Holston's work is useful, as he elucidates how contradictory land legislation allowed for layers of illegalities (2008a: 136). In that direction, my work contributes new findings regarding tensions among the legislated and the grounded, socially arranged, claims to land. I explore the perplexities that legal reification instigates, as contiguities and continuities of people's ideas and practices around local land challenge legal categories. The conflicts between local/moral ideas of ownership and state/jural categories of property are the axis of Chapter 6, allowing also for analogies with the interaction between jural and mythical conceptualisations of land (Abramson 2000a).

The tensions between land as symbol of the nation and of the state or as privately held commodity is often complicated by more radical versions of modernity, such as socialism. Much has been written about attempts to redistribute lands following radical changes in post-Soviet and post-colonial politico-jural regimes (Abrahams 1996). This literature also shows that property transition accommodated past claims alongside land's actual usages. Some cases bring to the forefront the contested moralities at stake, in such new uses and allocations, akin to notions of ideas on land's 'moral' ownership in Alto

Belice. Research in Eastern Europe has highlighted contestations across ethnic lines (Kaneff 2002) or the ‘fluidity’ and ‘porosity’ of land restored to communities (Verdery 2003; Humphrey and Verdery 2004). Verdery’s ‘politics of elasticity’ underlines that new land claims arising from restitutions, involved murky negotiations, often imperilling local relations (1996: 159). The ‘uncomfortable contiguities’ among land plots in Alto Belice can be compared to this situation. The discourse on states-in-transition relates to the changing characteristics of property (Benda-Beckmann et al. 2009b). Authors have shown that ‘transition’ was a model not backed up by practice, as other issues came to the fore: recombinant forms and movement from central administration to disorderly ‘clan’ control (Stark 1990), or return to fiefdoms, which, indeed relates to discourse on the rise of ‘Mafia’ (Humphrey 2002: xxi and 6). My work in Sicily fits with this tradition in that, exploring the cooperatives’ allocations of the confiscated land, I highlight the grounded continuities that accompany legal changes.

A question stemming from my ethnography is whether the antimafia confiscations were a top-down project of social transformation. As discussed, I focus on the state activity’s unintended changes: how they provoked reactions, accommodations, and uninvited results. Studies of socialist agrarian transformation show how repeasantation (Page 2010) or compulsory villagisation programmes (Scott 1998: 223–61) met various degrees of resistance. As in Alto Belice, there were disjunctures in both socialist and post-socialist examples, between what was legislated at the centre, and what happened in rural areas. This indicates further dimensions to the ‘moral ownership’ theme: for some, moral ownership was conceived as being *against* the central directives of state institutions – and hence may count as another unintended consequence of the state-induced processes of change. Verdery notes that ‘a local sphere obedient to central directives was a laughable image’ in Romania (2002: 27), while the oxymoron of ‘conflicting complementarity’ between state and locals’ strategies that Creed points out in the process of ‘domesticating

revolution' is also relevant in Sicily (1998: 8). Comparisons with this literature are, however, limited. Firstly, there, property conflicts are produced because of a movement 'from plan to clan' (Dunn 2004: 79), from the state to the private. This situation is also evident in post-colonial Tanzania, where 'people obtain rights by virtue of their membership of descent groups' (Caplan 1975: 98). In Alto Belice, by contrast, people are promised (and to an extent experience) the reverse movement, from a 'malignant' private to a 'benign' public apparatus. The Sicilian 'from the clans to the state' is therefore exactly the reverse movement in comparison with post-socialist land restitutions. Secondly, the socialist organisation of property collapsed, alongside its political upkeep. The restitutions 'attempted to create the status pro ante' returning land to individuals claiming it on the basis of pre-socialist rights (Verdery 1996: 133–36). Antimafia cooperatives, instead, come into contact with *mafiosi* every day, partly *because of* the state's new concepts of property, enacted in the confiscations. Unlike socialism in Eastern Europe, mafia is still a salient phenomenon in Alto Belice. The 'perpetuated political interpretation of agriculture' that Creed notes for post-socialist Bulgaria (1998: 219) takes place, in Sicily, precisely *because of* the actual, grounded experience of mafia, far from obsolete, in the face of the Italian state's 'post-mafia' discourse of Alto Belice being 'liberated from the mafia' (Libera 2010b).

In the next chapter, I discuss theoretical analyses on mafia and antimafia, and state how my research contributes to these debates, providing a historical narrative that shows how mafia has been entrepreneurial and closely linked with political processes throughout the 20th century, and how the peasant and cooperative movements, articulated in antimafia directives, responded. The antimafia cooperatives manifest continuities between, on the one hand, antimafia commitment, production and organisation and, on the other hand, the class-based peasant movement that contested mafia throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I narrate this history in order to show how people's experience of the antimafia cooperatives in Alto Belice evolved in relation to the land confiscations and associated access to land and work.

# Chapter 3

## Modularities and Configurations: The Antimafia Movement and Struggles over Land and Cooperativism

### Introduction

This chapter opens up the theme of social change – and the continuities that accompany processes of change. It offers a historical/local contextualisation of the dynamics of interactions between the key categories – the state, cooperatives, mafia and antimafia, and the overlap between their agents – as these emerged in Alto Belice, the ‘hinterland’ of Palermo. At the same time it should be emphasized that this is very much an ethnographically based chapter, presenting a historical ethnography that situates my informants’ activities and ideas in historical time (Fabian 2002). It gives voice to contemporary actors, my informants from Alto Belice, as they reflect on ‘the antimafia movement’, commemorating it and updating its meaning today. Moreover, as the first ethnographic chapter, it provides the backdrop for the ethnographic discussion in the remainder of the dissertation.

In exploring the interactions between state, cooperatives, mafia and antimafia, one crucial question posed here is the ways in which the antimafia movement has been intertwined with cooperativism and communism in rural Western Sicily, a question that becomes more acute when we look at the ways in which their actors have overlapped. Ethnographic exploration allows an assessment of the lasting impact of this interaction and the meanings of these notions today, reflecting on people’s current negotiations of historically informed terms.

The range of narratives that research participants shared with me is interspersed here with discussion based on secondary sources. Thus richly historicised, the relations between mafia, antimafia and cooperatives can be better understood in terms of the

continuities of agents and practices and, equally, in grasping their transformations. In parallel, I also examine the particular form of rural communism that developed in Sicily.

This chapter has two main goals. Firstly, I am aiming to make a historical and ethnographic contribution, exploring the trajectory of struggles over time. The antimafia peasant movement developed through a history of conflict, engaging relations of production with configurations of state, urban and rural politics. I elucidate how peasant movements were organised around antimafia in terms of cooperativist claims and practices. These elements interacted with each other in various ways, to the point where in certain instances they became intertwined. My model draws on Blok's portrayal, in *The Mafia of a Sicilian Village* (1974), of *mafiosi* acting as patrons and violent middlemen (often alongside state agents), and also the changing configurations of tensions between state and mafia relations, which range from collaboration to conflict. I show that there has been a shift in the focus of political struggles regarding alliances, claims and agents, from struggles over land to struggles over markets, where mafia re-emerge as powerful middlemen but now in the role of market brokers (*senzali*).

Throughout I stress the role of legal and rural administration processes, as both aspiration and outcome. Cooperativism and antimafia mobilisation interacted in important ways with legal and policy frameworks. The pivotal moment for this shift was the agrarian reform legislation passed in 1950, enabling the Sicilian Regional Assembly to pass decrees passed by 1953. Although this law broke up latifundia, at least nominally, it was a moderate reform that did not collectivise land or provide for access to agricultural resources that would have made the resulting small plots viable in time. It was passed by a relatively conservative government, in response to popular pressure. The historical narrative up until the 1950–53 agrarian reform shows how struggles around land were directed against the latifundo, landlords, and mafia patrons (*gabelloti*) while the struggle primarily took the form of land occupations led by communists and socialists. The outcome, albeit contested as to

whether it fulfilled the peasants' aims, was the Agrarian Reform Law. (1953) The convergence between (most) peasants' positive stance towards law as a means of change and (some) politicians' support for the peasant struggles produced a form of 'revolutionary legality' that has, to a degree, been rejuvenated in today's antimafia movement. Antimafia mobilisation in the case described in the thesis is based on a model of cooperativism akin to collectivism: the peasants set up *worker-cooperatives*, based on communal land use (not necessarily land ownership).

The agrarian reform was undoubtedly a rupture in the fabric of social relations: in changing land tenure it also changed earlier experiences of cooperativism (i.e. worker-cooperatives) and the character of antimafia mobilisation. As I develop the narrative in the second part of the chapter the focus of struggle shifts from control of land to control of markets. The peasants' means of struggle becomes *producer-based* cooperativist organisation involving cooperative wineries and, more actively than before, political parties. The target of struggle shifts to the monopoly of markets and mafia brokers (*senz'ali*). Here, my account of the history draws on Schneider and Schneider's focus on global political economy and their discussion of mafia as a form of broker capitalism (1976; cf. Gribaudi 1991). Alto Belice was of great importance for the export of agricultural produce throughout Italy and beyond. Schneider and Schneider saw rural Sicily in this light: a region integrated in international dependencies through flows of people and produce, proposing that mafia power rose not from the isolation of the region but from engagement in global dynamics<sup>1</sup> (1976: 10). Antimafia mobilisation in the post-agrarian-reform era (including the present) directed against brokers is linked to a different practice of cooperativism: the constitution and development of *producer-based cooperative wineries* (instead of landless workers-cooperatives).

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<sup>1</sup> Schneider and Schneider draw on history and world-systems theory (Wallerstein 1974).

The second aim of this chapter is to make a contribution to more general and theoretical questions about the nature of cooperativism. While it may be understood in terms of the guiding principles, forms and ideas configured across different cooperatives, cooperativism (as well as communism, with which it was associated) in Alto Belice has various meanings for different people in diverse places and times. A historical approach to cooperativism in Alto Belice, therefore, needs to give an account not only of its broad ideals but also relationships on the ground.

Notably, there are various kinds of cooperativism; for example, the wine industry is particularly well suited to a cooperative mode of organisation involving producer-based cooperatives, while the *bracciante* movement of the 1940s organised a different form of communalist, worker-based, cooperativism. The local variant of politicised cooperativism has to do with antimafia ideology, which developed as a historical current within. In that direction, I propose to conceptualise cooperativism as a ‘modular’ notion, possessing some core characteristics but changing in form and content in relation to the specific contexts in which the ‘module’ is developed and deployed. Here, I am drawing on the way Benedict Anderson approaches nationalism, nationality and nation-ness as cultural artefacts, which came into historical being in specific circumstances and were:

... the spontaneous distillation of a complex ‘crossing’ of historical forces; but ... once created, they became ‘modular’, capable of being transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations. (Anderson 2006: 4)

Anderson’s account suggests standardisation of a notion that in turn allows portability and distillation in new contexts. Finally, a third, minor, aim of the chapter is to discuss the changing forms and significance of the mafia and the *mafiosi* in the different economic and political contexts as well as their changing interests in each instance. This feeds back into the discussion on how contemporary *mafiosi* are part of the social and

cultural landscape. This inquiry emphasises the enduring impact of mafia influence in the area, challenging the Consortium's idea that 'the land has been liberated from the mafia' in Alto Belice.

### 3.1. Land and Dissent

#### 3.1.1. The *Casa del Popolo*

In Alto Belice, a social centre, the *Casa del Popolo* (People's House) in the village of Chiana, 5 kilometres from San Giovanni, was most active in the salvaging and shaping of local historical narratives, especially regarding agrarian struggles. The progressive political culture of the village allowed for constant re-negotiation of the past aimed at constructing collective memory (Connerton 1990; Fracchia 2004), which I traced in oral accounts.<sup>2</sup> Early in my fieldwork, trade unionists and members of the antimafia cooperatives had advised me to visit the *Casa* to hear 'the old men and their stories'. Constructed in the 1950s, the *Casa* was a welcoming place, 'filled with history', as a resident described it. Socialist realism style paintings, resembling the Mexican muralists or the Sicilian communist artist Renato Guttuso, hung on the walls, depicting mothers working in fields alongside their children and moustached men waving red flags over grain piles. In the dim light, across tables scattered in the main room of the *Casa*, old men played cards, read the paper and chatted.



**Photo 8:** The entrance to the *Casa Del Popolo* at Chiana



**Photo 9:** A banner on a wall of the *Casa*. Notice the hammer and sickle surrounded by a heart, symbol of the massive women's participation in the rural communist antimafia movement.

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<sup>2</sup> See Charlton et al. (2006) and Portelli (1991; 1997) for methodological issues in collecting oral accounts.



When I asked what period the murals and paintings depicted, a man simply explained that Sicilian *braccianti* and *contadini* (peasants) had been involved in so many struggles that it would be misguided to identify the paintings with any one specific historical. The men present, all between 50 and 80 years old, then debated what would be most important to portray: the *Fasci Siciliani dei Lavoratori* (Sicilian Workers Leagues) (*Fasci*)<sup>3</sup> movement of the 1890s? the post World-War II land occupation movement? the 1960s cooperative movement? Everyone agreed that any of these historical moments was equally qualified for artistic depiction. ‘All of these struggles consisted of families claiming land, forming cooperatives to manage it, occupying it to ensure it ... communist struggles but also family struggles, with women and kids involved,’ a trade unionist clarified. Evidently, the peasants’ collective historical imagination was informed by their political sympathies and also encompassed the rich variety of actors in these struggles. Interestingly, despite the widespread and often violent rural unrest in Sicily throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Aya 1976a; 1976b), none of the *Casa* points of historical reference went back to uprisings before the *Fasci* in the 1890s. This suggests that their historical awareness was mapped by the limits of genealogical narrative: their grandfathers had lived memories of the *Fasci*.

Taking the instances that the people of the *Casa* found significant for the construction of cooperativism and antimafia consciousness, I therefore locate the beginning of the relevant historical narrative in the 1892–93 *Fasci* movement, as this was also the launching point of modern peasant struggles and involved both the formation of cooperatives *and* the building of antimafia politics in practice. The *Fasci* was a federation (the meaning of the term in Italian) of *braccianti*, which had a mixed (socialist and Catholic) background and aimed at the collectivisation of the latifundia. In this respect, current antimafia cooperatives members often refer to the *Fasci* movement as ‘the ancestor of

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<sup>3</sup> The *Fasci Siciliani dei Lavoratori* has nothing to do with Fascism. Mussolini appropriated this term from left wing terminology of the 1920s when establishing his movement (Mack Smith 1983), much in the same way National Socialism was configured in late 1920s Germany.

antimafia cooperativism'. Here I shall highlight the role of Verro, a *Fasci* leader, to show that mafia and antimafia often interpenetrated in the development of the peasant movement. I also discuss the peasantry's radical involvement in cooperativism from its origin and the impact it had in cities and internationally. In this way, historicising helps to both de-provincialise and nuance my field of enquiry.

### **3.1.2 Verro and the *Fasci* movement (1892–1915): the birth of the antimafia?**

Antimafia activists today invoke the trade union leaders Barbato and Verro, considered antimafia organisers despite their 'lack of clear consciousness in organisational matters' (Renda 1977: 195). Verro was one of the leading figures of the *Fasci* movement, which drew together landless peasants, regardless of gender or age, to demand better work conditions. *Fasci*-coordinated groups of *braccianti* occupied landed estates (*latifundio*), challenging the absenteeism of Palermo-based proprietors, and formed cooperatives to cultivate these lands. The *Fasci Siciliani* was a key influence in re-ordering socialist priorities in Southern Europe. Kautsky hailed the Sicilian '*bracciantato*'<sup>4</sup> as 'the centre of the sympathies and thoughts of the international proletariat'<sup>5</sup> (quoted in Romano 1959: 547). Subsequently Marxist scholars have rejected the idea that the movement was a 'spontaneous' outgrowth of peasant consciousness of a *jacquerie* type, insisting on its '*protagonismo*', i.e. its crucial role in late 19<sup>th</sup> century labour movement (Renda 1977: 328; Santino 2000). Verro's contribution to the 'Corleone agreements' (*i patti di Corleone*)<sup>6</sup> confirms this position (Renda 1977: 160–170). Leading Alto Belice trade unionists like Verro from Corleone and Barbato from Chiana were imprisoned in 1894, after the movement was crushed by the state.

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<sup>4</sup> Portmanteau merging *bracciante* (agricultural worker) and *proletariato* (proletariat) often used by trade unionists and cooperative agents. As described in Chapter 5, in Sicily, a *bracciante* is a person who works as a field hand, making a living through daily wage labour in an agrarian context. Historically, *braccianti* refers to landless peasants; today most *braccianti* employed by the antimafia cooperatives owned land of their own.

<sup>5</sup> However, note the anxiety about the mixture of 'socialism, anarchism, business and mafia' in a letter Labriola sent to Friedrich Engels, reporting on the *Fasci* (in Santino 2000: 33).

<sup>6</sup> *I patti* was the first trade union collective contract in Italy (Paternostro 2009).

Some writers have described the *Fasci* as socialist or even anarchist (Giarrizzo 1975; Ganci 1977) and as ‘the birth of the antimafia movement’ (Santino 2000: 16; Scolaro 2008). However, recent research has stressed *infiltration* of the *Fasci* by local mafia (Dickie 2004: 138). Verro even joined the mafia himself (Dickie 2004: 171), aiming to provide further impetus to the movement through connections and alliances with *mafiosi* in struggling against the state. These alliances suggest that attempted peasant mobilisation was in response to a specific configuration of state and agrarian class oppression. Gramsci argued that the state had allied itself with the latifundists in the inter-war period (2005: 67). However, the mafia foresaw the violent demise of the *Fasci* and opportunistically joined the state and the city-based absentee landlord class, solidifying the ‘historical bloc’<sup>7</sup> of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, despite having temporarily allied with the peasant movement. After martial law suppressed the *Fasci* in 1893, a massive peasant exodus from Sicily took place, largely through fear of state and mafia retaliations. Following the flow of migrant labour, Verro went to the USA for 2 years, after he was released from prison in 1896. Subsequently he returned to Corleone in 1898 and became the mayor of the village in the first elections after the introduction of universal suffrage (Paternostro 1994), capitalising on his *Fasci* involvement and establishing agrarian cooperatives anew (Paternostro 2006a and b). On 3 November 1915, he was assassinated by three local *mafiosi* (Paternostro 1994: 48; Hess 1998).

The example of Verro illustrates the intricacies of the *Fasci* movement: the mutual reproduction and eventual cross-fertilisation of mafia and antimafia led to fuzzy conceptual boundaries between mafia/antimafia and who could be identified on ‘either’ side, especially in times of social upheaval against a conservative state in struggles related to widespread

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<sup>7</sup> Gramsci’s term for ‘the complex, contradictory and discordant *ensemble* of the superstructures, [which] is the reflection of the *ensemble* of the social relations of production’ (Gramsci 1971: 366). He applies this concept to analyse events after the *Fasci*, and the alliance of mafia with the conservative state, although he does not refer directly to the mafia.

claims for resources (land and work). Conversely, it is important to grasp how the mafia arose *within* peasant mobilisation before the mafia turned *against* it: before they resorted to violence, *mafiosi* incorporated and emulated the social alliances they could not control. This has been a key reason for the relative social consensus the mafia has historically enjoyed.

Today, members of the antimafia cooperatives locate the *Fasci* activists as the ‘deep historical origins of the antimafia movement’. Public commemorations link the villages of Alto Belice through common processes of remembering (Connerton 1990), often organised by trade unions. In June 2009, I participated in one such ceremony, a modest event held in Verro’s memory, which took place in front of his statue in the main park of Corleone. I was taken there by people working for the antimafia cooperatives, who told me that it was an ‘annual event in memory of a peasant leader who paid for his antimafia commitment with his life’. Amongst the – very few – attendees were cooperative representatives (such as Checco from the Falcone cooperative), the mayor of Corleone and trade unionists. Together they commemorated Verro without any mention of his mafia affiliation, indeed stressing his ‘sacrifice’ in the struggle against the mafia. The mayor of Corleone read out a list of people who had been assassinated by local *mafiosi* because of their antimafia activity. In a narrative genealogy commencing with Verro, ‘the antimafia forefather’, the list incorporated people as diverse as Placido Rizzotto (a communist trade unionist) and Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa (a *carabiniere* general).

This modest commemorative event shows how the antimafia legacy is renegotiated today. Current antimafia activists separate historical actors from the messy contingencies of their time, to construct a genealogy of great names retrospectively cast as ‘those sacrificed in the antimafia movement’. The contemporary antimafia cooperatives see themselves as the continuation of the tradition of the antimafia movement, and thus arguably their activists, in such commemorative narratives, evoke a ‘selective tradition’ comparable to the cultural expressions used by labour aristocracies historically, as Gavin Smith notes, to

‘represent’ the ‘cultural survival’ of working class traditions and struggles (1999: 30). Iannazzo, the far-right Corleone mayor’s position is indicative: he privately told me at that event, that he felt isolated, as his antimafia sentiment and commitment derived not from the ‘movement’ but the ‘fascist antimafia struggle’. He felt isolated, as contemporary antimafia cooperatives identified with the communist peasant tradition of Alto Belice. In the next section, after briefly discussing Sicilian Fascism, I examine the characteristics of rural communism and why it was so central to antimafia organisation in the countryside (unlike fascism or ‘sicilianism’), juxtaposing it to politics in Palermo that were expressed in separatism (Spataro 2001).

### **3.1.3. Inter- and post-War configurations: Fascism, urban Sicilianism and rural communism**

According to some historians of the inter-war period, state and mafia had no visible interconnections. Finley et al. assert that the ‘*outward manifestations* of the Mafia were dealt with far more effectively by Mussolini than by any liberal government in modern times’ (Finley et al. 1986: 107, emphasis added). However, the fascist over-criminalisation of the island’s population (11,000 arrests in Palermo alone), was not coupled with policies aimed at tackling the relatively favourable social consensus towards mafia. The reluctant withdrawal of the ‘iron Prefect’ Mori from Palermo in 1930, loosened the state’s grasp on Cosa Nostra (Duggan 1989: 258–60). For this school of thought, Fascist leaders’ antimafia attempt to monopolise violence was hesitant because of their awareness of the obstacles posed by *omertà* (the mafia’s code of silence).

Other historians, however, argue more convincingly that there were other reasons why Fascism did not challenge the latifundo system’s vested interests in maintaining mafia *gabellotti*.<sup>8</sup> Local fascists were affiliated with *mafiosi* patrons and so the latifundia protection

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<sup>8</sup> A *gabelloto* was a protector, a middleman in the agrarian labour market, the main figure of mafia patron at the time. Their landholding was a service to the absentee landowners of the big Sicilian estates before the 1953

(which relied on mafia labour patrons, i.e. *gabellotti*) was left intact (Duggan 1989: 193). The reproduction of the agrarian bloc within Fascism suggests mutual interests of state and mafia (Lupo 1981). Mussolini's 'commitment' to the eradication of the mafia was therefore mere political rhetoric. Local memories speak of affluent *mafiosi* who took an active part in dissolving agrarian cooperatives alongside the fascist police. *Signor* Nicosia, born 1925, a regular at the *Casa del Popolo*, simply told me his memory of how, in the main square of Chiana : 'in the deep times of Fascism, there was that *mafioso* who sat himself down to eat, and he had that *frittata* [fried foodstuff], it smelled so good ... while we were wasting away from hunger....' On a wider scale, anti-socialist sentiment shared by fascists and *mafiosi* aggravated mass labour emigration abroad or to Northern Italy, especially for the radically politicised in the *braccianti* movement (Schneider 1990). Some *braccianti*, previous habitués of the *Casa*, had been forced to change jobs and emigrate for fear of violence: they fled to Australia, Argentina or 'Merica', 'despised as we were by fascists and *mafiosi* alike', as old pensioner peasants in the *Casa* told me.

Eventually, the mafia capitalised on the historical changes: links between Sicilian and US Cosa Nostra assisted the Allied invasion of Sicily (summer of 1943), the first important moment in the military advance against the Axis in Europe. A flow of intelligence from mafia to the US Navy facilitated the relatively safe invasion of the island (Campbell 1977; Newark 2007; Follain 2005). To reciprocate for this cooperation, the US Army helped install 55 mafia mayors across the island during the 'transition to democracy' (Costanzo 2006; but see Lupo 1997: 21–33), including local brokers like Lucky Luciano and

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reform; in that respect, they occupied middlemen positions between different levels of power, local and broader, securing the landlords' profits through violent means of controlling the local agrarian landless workforce (Blok 1974: 33). Local historian Nania, notes for San Giovanni, that the *gabellotti* patrons soon turned into the local *burgisi* (bourgeoisie) in the 1920s, forming the Alto Belice agrarian middle classes, as they pocketed substantial parts of the profit made *and* maintained positions of local power: the 'public order in the area' from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century already (Nania 2000: 131). After the breakdown of the estates and the distribution of land, as shown in the latter part of this chapter, the violent labour patrons, *gabellotti*, now acting as landowners in their own right, turned into brokers (*senzali*).

Calò Vizzini. Cosa Nostra became a player in containing the spread of communism to the South after the leftist Resistance to Fascism spread in the North (Robb 2009: 125). In the course of this momentum, an urban, mafia-backed separatist politics developed in Sicily (Nicolosi 1981) as ‘the mafia exploited the gap left by an ineffective state...’, leading to an ‘outburst of *sicilianismo*, the arid local patriotism that had so often been used by the Sicilian ruling class to defuse any attempts at reform’ (Finley et al. 1987: 190). Secessionist fomentations gained ground in Palermo, linked to mafia sicilianist populism, peaking with the formation of the Movement for the Independence of Sicily, a party with deep Palermitan *mafiosi* influences, whose ideology oscillated between separatism, ‘independentism’ (Ganci 1977) and ‘Sicilian patriotism’ (Nicolosi 1981).

What is most important for this thesis is that separatist politics failed to spread to Alto Belice despite its adjacency to Palermo, where the lack of industrial development made separatism a powerful force among the poor in a city bereft of jobs in productive sectors. Meanwhile, the Alto Belice *braccianti*, influenced by the communist party, took to the fields en masse, occupying the estates under the slogan ‘give the land to those who work it’, thus contributing to the collapse of the latifundo (Blok 1974: 83). Resources were immediately available, in terms of land: the alternative political future that the *braccianti* demanded was the collective ownership of the latifundo. The impetus of post-War change thus allowed peasants to seize land and transform the latifundist exploitative system of production. Events such as the occupation of the *Drago* estate in October 1946 by 3,000 peasants from Chiana and 1,000 from San Giovanni, who formed cooperatives to cultivate it, are typical of the movement at that time (Di Matteo 1967: 484).

The trade unionist Placido Rizzotto led a number of similar land occupations; the mafia assassinated him in 1948 (Paternostro 1994). Today the Falcone antimafia cooperative owns the usufruct of a plot confiscated from a Corleonese *mafioso* in the Drago area. Here, compacted in a piece of land, lies a tangible continuity, linking one of today’s

antimafia cooperatives to the past of the ‘antimafia movement’ (see Appendix 5 [map IV]). Local narratives claim that this tract of land was the very place where Placido made his passionate speech to the gathered *braccianti* before they occupied the Drago estate, faced with the mafia’s *gabelloti*’s threats and violence.

Immediately after post World War II therefore, the *braccianti*, in a revival of the *Fasci*, formed cooperatives and organised communitarian uses of land on the squatted latifundia (Santino 2000). Communism was winning over the peasantry, despite ‘the anti-bolshevik crusades’ of mafia patrons (*gabelloti*) and their co-opted bandits. (In that period, armed raids in the homes of well-known unionists and political assassinations of dozens of communists led to a turmoil of terror, led by *mafiosi* and executed mainly by brigands like the infamous Giuliano (Dickie 2004: 210). Anthropologists have noted how, in different places the PCI assisted certain (often rural) working class to develop a political identity (Li Causi 1993) and sense of citizenship (Pratt 2003), becoming a grassroots cultural influence (Shore 1990). Pratt notes that, in Tuscany, the PCI was ‘the movement, which produced an historic transformation of peasants into citizens, able for the first time to claim rights and participate in a political and civic culture [...] [and] should be assessed on the same terms as other civil rights movements’ (2003: 85). For this reason, Sicilian rural communism should be contextualised in terms of the specific historical circumstances, which, as I show in the next section, were co-articulated with the pursuit of ‘revolutionary legality’ and backed by the member of the Italian parliament belonging to the Communist party (PCI). The function of the *gabelloti* was to protect, through violent means, the interests of the absentee landowners. These mafia overseers eventually, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, developed into a rural middle class (Blok 1974; Nania 2000), fiercely opposed to the peasant movement.

Sicilian rural communism was represented by grassroots peasant organisers such as *braccianti* unionists of the CGIL (Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro) union,



affiliated to the PCI, Placido Rizzotto being the most well known. As discussed below, narratives of communist history were expressed in idioms<sup>9</sup> of bravery that allocated a place for the emergence of antimafia commitments. At the same time, the ideal of rural communism built on ideas of land communalism in what I have described earlier (2.3.2) as a call for the ‘re-appropriation of the commons’, in a reverse Polanyist framework (Polanyi 2001: 36). This grassroots communalism of the peasants encouraged the formation of worker-based cooperatives, the most efficient system of communal land cultivation. ‘Appropriating the commons’ was not arbitrary in its development; in fact, it was encouraged by a specific favourable configuration of some state agents’ ideologies and legislative activities, as shown below.

#### **3.1.4. Revolutionary legality and Portella: post-War law, land and violence**

Post World War II land occupations and cooperatives lasted from the Liberation (autumn 1943) to the Portella della Ginestra massacre (spring 1947). What especially marks this period of activism is that the movement’s legalist claims found a response and basis for actions in the Gullo decrees (*decreti Gullo*), notably Decree Number 279, 19 October 1944 (‘concessions of uncultivated land to farmers’). This law-oriented impetus in turn provides a basis for comparison not only with the 1953 agrarian reform but also with current developments in Sicily, based on the idea of legality that contemporary antimafia cooperatives promote. The impetus in question provides a framework to historicise the significance of law and the idea of legality for current antimafia cooperativism. More than that, what is at stake is the ways that interactions between peasants and political power centred on legislative procedures. Alto Belice experienced what Hobsbawm has described as the ‘entrenched legalism of peasant land invasions’ (1974: 124); in fact, there was an ‘interrelation among the collective memory of the peasants and the organised mobilisation

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<sup>9</sup> The term ‘idiom’ is used in this thesis to include not only verbal but a wide range of other practices.

around a law favourable to them' (Hobsbawm quoted in Rossi-Doria 1983: 115). Even after Portella put a stop to direct action, the Gullo decrees represented a basis for peasant mobilisations and cooperativism that corresponded to the peasantry's 'legalist sense of justice' (Rossi-Doria 1983: 114).

The *decreti* were laws initiated by the communist minister of agriculture (Gullo) in the Italian Coalition government formed in April 1944,<sup>10</sup> inaugurating the process that would lead to the demise of the latifundia and their eventual distribution to the *braccianti* who cultivated them. The minister's policies were embraced by the southern peasantry, and he (and the PCI) was conscious of their needs. For instance, the decree no 279 19ct 1944 (concessions of uncultivated land to farmers), drawing on previous ones (decrees 25 June 1944, n.151, 30 October 1943, n.2/b and 29 May 1944, n.141), notes:

**Art. 1** – All farmers legally associated in cooperatives or other similar organization, can obtain land allotments from the private and public sector which are uncultivated or insufficiently utilized in relation to their potential, the agricultural needs of the area and *the cultural needs of the cooperatives in relation to the agricultural needs of the nation*.

**Art. 5** – The duration of the concessions may not exceed four agrarian years.  
[emphasis added]<sup>11</sup>

Delighted with the cooperative movement, Gullo and his party thought that the extension of cooperative property might offer an impetus for 'communist' administration on the island. In the Documents of the 5th Congress of the PCI, Gullo and Grieco (prominent PCI members in the Constituent Assembly) proposed that: 'at all costs, we have to direct the activities of the cooperatives towards collective forms of management ... we always have to search cooperativist forms, to encourage the peasants to renounce the

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<sup>10</sup> At the time, Italy was governed by a Coalition in which the conservative Christian Democracy (DC) party was in the majority but in which the Communist Party (PCI) also participated. Stemming from broader the anti-Fascist consensus, it achieved a lot in its brief existence but collapsed due to Cold War tensions when the Communists were thrown out of government in 'the May 1947 crisis' – which in fact was partly induced by the dramatic events of Portella, in Alto Belice (Ginsborg 2003: 111–13).

<sup>11</sup> Source: [http://www.centrosocialesaliano.it/english\\_pages/gullo\\_i.htm](http://www.centrosocialesaliano.it/english_pages/gullo_i.htm).

constant fragmentation of land [that a reform would bring about]' (quoted in Renda 1976: 60). However, the delay in implementing the law angered the *bracciantato*, who started applying it de facto, occupying the latifundia and forming cooperatives to manage them.

Occupying these lands, cooperatives participants were:

... in full consciousness that they represented a form of revolutionary legality [*legalità rivoluzionaria*] ... aiming to maintain at any cost possible the de facto possession of the lands already occupied and worked .... The motto of the masses was 'We shall not move'... [The peasants] transcended the myth of Sicily's insularity, essentialised in the independence of the Sicilian homeland (*patria Siciliana*). (Marino 1979a: 199)

The communist minister's law expressed solidarity with the peasantry while, at the same time, aiming to capitalise politically on the movement's legalism, supported cooperativist management of land in Sicily as a projection of a collectivist future.<sup>12</sup> The consolidation of class conscious *braccianti* masses around this mode of legalism counteracted the 'inter-classist' alliances of the urban-based absentee landlords of the rural areas (Marino 1979b: 178). The revolutionary legality of the landless peasants was coupled with the radical legalism of the most progressive agricultural law proposal in Italian history. Gullo's decrees were contested within the Coalition government (Renda 1980: 48). The main Segni decree (September 1946) extended their impact, proliferating opportunities for cooperativist agriculture (Di Matteo 1967: 484). These developments allowed the *braccianti* to impose, through activist means, legislation suspended by the Italian state, which appeared unclear about the agrarian reform it had planned. Post-war legislation allowed only a small scope for worker/peasant political action directed against mafia and absentee landlords. A Sicilian sociologist asserts:

The [Gullo and Segni] decrees were not revolutionary *in themselves*; the problem was to have laws that would set the large landless masses in action, from a class position

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<sup>12</sup> 'The cooperative is the cell of the future socialist organisation', noted Gullo (quoted in Rossi-Doria 1983: 106).

counteracting the reactionary hegemony. ... The decrees were ‘revolutionary’ *in that context*; the terrain of the struggle was laid out by the decrees; this allowed for the rupture of the inter-classist policy and for the formation of a social block alternative to the dominant one. (Brigaglia 1977: 41; emphasis added)

When Brigaglia states that the decrees ‘allowed for the rupture of the inter-classist policy and for the formation of a social block alternative to the dominant one’, what he is referring to is the mobilisation of peasants around ‘revolutionary legality’ a class-based movement pulled together through interactions with progressive legal policies. The Gullo decrees were the outcome of exceptional circumstances and did not represent any long standing pro-peasant radical policy in Sicily. They are significant however, because they brought into being a tradition of revolutionary legalism in Sicily (relevant to contemporary antimafia cooperatives as well: see 3.2.5). Members of the antimafia cooperatives today took up these measures on the ground (literally) and constantly refer to them. The emergence of this ‘revolutionary legality’ is critical because it marks out one way in which Sicily is very different from many other cases, where land occupations are self-consciously in defiance of a legal order. Contemporary examples include the reclaimed factories in Argentina and workers’ ‘horizontalism’ (Sitrin 2006), or almost any squat (Bey 2008). Sicily in the late 1940s became a point of compromise, where leftist politicians managed to get a legal framework friendly to occupations organised by landless workers and cooperativisation into law, because conservative forces assumed as a matter of course that these would never be enforced. Mafia arrangements were obviously one extreme example of the on-the-ground forces that ensured it would never happen. This meant there was an unusual situation where the common interest of the state, of protecting the interests of major property owners, was not only privatised (which is hardly unusual) but *criminalised*, on paper, and occupations were often at least ostensibly legal. As noted (2.3.2), there are other examples, notably Brazil’s MST, where this happens, but even there legality is just seen as a

loophole (Stedile 2002). This different orientation to legality in the Sicilian Left is central to current configurations of the antimafia movement.

While the Coalition national government in summer 1947 was suffering internal tensions (the tensions regarding the Gullo degrees are an example of this), regional elections took place in Sicily. The triumph of the People's Block (*Blocco del Popolo*, a coalition of the PCI and the PSI, the socialist party, which gained 30.4% of the vote, when the conservative party came second with 20.5%) shook the political system at large. Nationally, this contributed to the May 1947 crisis; locally, it had violent, destabilising effects linked to the peasantry's fear to oppose the mafia (Santino 2006). Regional elections on 18 April 1947 signalled the victory of the Popular Block, a large coalition representing the radicalised landless peasants (Smith 1987). The twofold character of the peasant movement (its militancy and activism coupled with its legalism and parliamentary representation) suggests that their activism aimed to establish a fair agrarian reform that would endorse and promote cooperativism. Prevailing over mafia's *sicilianismo* (regionalism) was a success: the electoral triumph was a surprise, as it flew in the face of what I described in the previous section as urban alliances between *mafiosi* and the separatist landlord class (Marchese 2006: 58). *Signor* Nicosia from the *Casa del Popolo*, who was a 22-year-old *bracciante* at the time of the elections, had joined the communist party and voted for the Popular Block and felt that 'the world had started to make sense at last'. I was struck by his passionate will to share his experience, as we sat at the table where he and his friends, such as *signor* Schirò, passed most of their day. They were fascinated by discussing contemporary politics, enjoying the company of the young, and noted that many youngsters' interest in the peasant movement was 'boosted by the [contemporary] antimafia cooperatives, which do a good job in keeping our history alive'.

Nicosia then told me about the events at Portella on May Day 1947, as the crowds of largely landless peasants gathered to celebrate a day of rest and post-election political

euphoria: gunfire into the crowd of *braccianti* families caused mayhem. People from the three villages that led the peasant movement were killed and wounded. Scattering, people ran across the hills and back down to their villages. No one could tell at that point who was shooting: ‘bullets came from all sides’ (Casarrubea 2005: 250). Many in the *Casa del Popolo* were Portella survivors but, as *signor* Nicosia’s storytelling was most vivid, his comrades let him narrate:

... we had won at the 18<sup>th</sup> of April [elections]; we took part in the elections with the *Blocco del Popolo*, under the flag of Garibaldi. And we took to the street for only the third time after so many years of Fascism, to celebrate our victory and the 1<sup>st</sup> of May. And *Barbato’s* rock [explained below] was approachable for the first time. That piece of granite stood there in the midst of the place and had become a symbol for the demonstrations. Before and during the early years of Fascism the *braccianti* who demonstrated along with their families went there to eat. So we reached that and, as in the days of our fathers, set to munch the bread and onion. And then there was the havoc. The shootings and the running ... all of a sudden. People started fleeing the place. I was scared. The most incredible thing was the horses’ screams ... like sirens from everywhere around; a hellish sound, very frightening. And we saw horses covered in blood....

*Signor* Schirò (interrupting):

... we were the three revolutionary villages. And we took it [to Portella] in Mayday; landless peasants. We made our way to Portella, all hugging each other, [people] from San Giovanni, from San Cipiriddu, on the first of May and other occasions. To celebrate the memory of the *Fasci*... And in ‘47, I was, when they started shooting, right by *Barbato’s* rock. I was 10 metres away from my uncle who was holding the socialist flag all this time, as people rose from eating and started running around. And in the end there were like 6 of us [from Chiana] and 5 from San Giovanni and 2 from San Cipiriddu who were shot.

Many of those present in the *Casa del Popolo*, agreed that ‘the dead of Portella call for justice; they ask who armed the Portella killers’. An ex-communist, who had fled Sicily for Australia immediately after Portella, told me, ‘Not a single President of the Republic came over to apologise and honour us for the first massacre of the state [*strage di Stato*] in modern Italian history’. It is widely believed in Alto Belice that Portella was the first of

many ambiguous violent eruptions in which the state's secret services were involved. Interestingly, people today do not recognise historical borders between mafia and state violence in events like Portella. There is debate among historians about whether the massacre was an ambush of the demonstration by *mafiosi* (Manali 2001), or by the infamous Giuliano gang recruited by *mafiosi* (Dickie 2004; Lomartire 2007) or by an alliance of neo-fascists and US secret services working closely with mafia (Casarrubea 2005: 251). Relations between mafia and banditry in specific moments of historical tensions have also been discussed (Hobsbawm 1965; 1972).

My interlocutors, however, do agree on Portella's solemn commemoration as a site of the 'most dearly felt' May Day celebrations in Sicily – and one of the most important in Italy. Thirteen rocks lie in symbolic representation of the thirteen people shot dead in the tragic event. A sad poem in the Sicilian dialect is carved on a 14<sup>th</sup> rock, the so-called 'stone of Barbato'.



Two monuments commemorating the peasant struggles of the late 1940s

**Photo 10:** The 'stone of Barbato' with a poem inscribed on it, at the Portella della Ginestra site

**Photo 11:** Right: monument to the mafia's victims in San Giovanni: the intellectual, the peasant and the youth, under the Blocco banner, are portrayed in 'socialist realism' style, while a mother is protecting her wounded child.

I joined May Day there in 2009, alongside antimafia cooperatives members. A few committed unionists from Chiana and Palermo had marched earlier in the morning from the *Casa* in Chiana (4 kms away) to the site. They were joined there by hundreds of families

coming from Palermo in a convoy of cars, parked for a couple of kilometres along the main road linking San Giovanni to Chiana. A local brass band played throughout, adding a suggestive note to the sunny day, as the music mixed with horns, talks and young laughter. The celebratory feel to the day peaked when the band started playing the Italian partisan song *Bella Ciao* and the *Internationale*, while the 8 mayors of Alto Belice villages (and members of the Consortium) walked to the 'stone of Barbato' to lay their commemorative offerings. Many in the crowd laughed, as some mayors, visibly annoyed, were known supporters of the far right.

The lives of some of the current antimafia cooperatives workers had been indirectly influenced by the Portella events. Peppe from San Giovanni was 40 at the time of fieldwork, and so not yet born in 1947, but Portella had had an impact on his family's history. Although the family were by no means leftist militants, his young aunt had gone to Portella with her nine-year-old daughter and her husband to participate in the feast along with their friends and were caught in the crossfire. Fearing further retaliation, they went to Tuscany and settled there. Peppe's older brother had immigrated to Germany some years later. Anna's name is inscribed on Barbato's rock but Peppe has never been to the Portella site to see it. As he tells it, the family 'fled due to mafia influence. Portella was a lesson to the landless movement at large: *mafiosi* showed they were ready for everything'. Very sad, he told me:

My little cousin, Anna, I often think of her, although I never met her. If she were alive today she'd be 28 years older than me! She was running with her mum, she got the bullet in her head, my aunt did not understand what happened, as she was running scared in the mayhem, she still had the little hand in her hand, dragging a body covered in blood... then she took her to San Giovanni... the kid died there.

Contemporary antimafia cooperatives invest in projects of 'social tourism', which included visits to Portella. During the one-day, urban visitors sit next to Portella's rocks and hear a guide narrate the 1947 events. Falcone employs young Palermitans as guides



seasonally on day contracts. I noticed that these cooperative representatives ‘explained’ the communist politics of the Portella demonstration by stating that ‘the peasants were communists for a piece of bread’. Roberto, a 25-year-old tourist guide for the cooperative Falcone, explained to me that ‘Libera advises us to be moderate’. At the same time, he also thought contemporary antimafia cooperatives continued the radical struggles ‘for land’. ‘At home I say things similar to Chiana’s old men, but here it’s a job, and I have to be cautious,’ he specified.

The tour guide’s remarks are representative of the way contemporary antimafia cooperatives deal with the history of the antimafia movement, summarising the various ways continuities with the past are articulated with current processes. As Gavin Smith notes, activists ‘select out from and reformulate various patterns of tradition’ (1999: 188) and this also characterises antimafia cooperatives depiction of the history of the area’s cooperativism and antimafia. Cooperativism, like communism in Sicily, mingled so saliently with the antimafia movement that it appears like a modular concept being ‘translanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations’ (Anderson 1983: 4). Therefore, cooperative models, like in Anderson’s scheme for nationalist ones, are adaptable to local contexts – and give voice to inchoate local desires by formulating them in terms of an imagined community. This approach shows that cooperativism has been a ‘modular’ notion (*sensu* Anderson), both in the historical specificities of its manifestations *and* in the ways people reminisce on it, reproduce it and commemorate it today. Its local historical development embraced the antimafia movement and evolved through it.

The members of contemporary antimafia cooperatives downplayed the ‘revolutionary legality’ of the Alto Belice peasants, in favour of promoting (and reading historical events through) a moderate political discourse. Their view recognised the

importance of employing legality (*legalità*) but excluded the ‘revolutionary legality’ of the Alto Belice peasants in favour of moderate contemporary reflections on history and the present. In the next section I look at the local political economy introduced by the agrarian reform.



**Photo 12:** Checco gives a speech to gathered tourists, explaining the history of the Portella massacre, at the actual site of the historical event.

## 3.2 Cooperative Wineries and Markets

### 3.2.1. The agrarian reform: a shift in class relations (1950s)

The most significant policy after Sicily became autonomous in 1946<sup>13</sup>, was the 1953 agrarian reform introduced by law number 841/50. Views on this reform in the relevant literature vary widely, many dubbing it a disaster. Most of my informants among local viticulturers and trade unionists in Alto Belice, however, looked back to the reform sympathetically. Nevertheless, some bitterly reflected on the lost opportunity for a ‘new world’ that the pre-reform cooperative movement had sought. Since the late 1920s, the PCI had been critical of the long awaited reform, as Gramsci pointed out:

The Turin communists (though they supported division of the land, subordinated to the solidarity action of the two classes) themselves warned against ‘miraculist’ illusions in a mechanical sharing out of the big estates.

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<sup>13</sup> Although it never became independent, Sicily was proclaimed an ‘autonomous Region’ of Italy. Today it is one of the five regions that have their own special autonomy, the only one with a parliament, and by far the largest. The Sicilian Assembly has the power to decide important issues such as the direction of EU funds for agriculture and health.

In the same article, of 3 January, we find:

What can a poor peasant achieve by occupying uncultivated or poorly cultivated lands? Without machinery, without accommodation on the place of work, without credit to tide him over till harvest-time, without cooperative institutions to acquire the harvest .... (Gramsci 1927: 5)

With the application of the Gullo decrees to the uncultivated and poorly cultivated lands a few years back, the swiftly constituted grassroots agrarian cooperatives managed land across more people, in comparison to the post-reform situation. Cooperatives in 1946 shared more than 86,000 ha, among their 50,000 members; 99,049 ha were allocated by 1950, of which 17,157 to *braccianti* and poor peasants and 24,759 ha to 7,712 small-holders (Santino 1997: 17). Therefore, the social base which the state's agrarian reform reached was more limited in scope, than the peasant movement's achievements. Moreover, the cooperativist organisation that rendered the peasants able for collective bargaining in reaching urban markets was substituted by a small-holder economy. The law aimed at shaping a small-proprietor class, offering land to individual families as opposed to collective organisations (as in Pratt 1994). It hence discouraged the formation of cooperatives and thus simultaneously deprived the locals of their main means of political and antimafia organisation. Many peasants, bereft of means of production other than land and of credit facilities, became dependent and vulnerable, resulting in another wave of mass emigration in the 1950s. A parliamentary commission set up by the PCI opined that, after the local barons had shared land among their kin, by 1949, 1,400 ha (mainly of vineyard) of land was left abandoned just in the Alto Belice village of San Giovanni alone. The commission found, for instance, 450 ha in the ownership of 'the prince of Principe, the *gabellotti* being the four brothers Caruso, known *mafiosi* of the Sacco clan, nicknamed the 'Caesar of Western Sicily', as well as two other latifundia whose mafia *gabellotti* financed bandits (quoted in di Matteo 1967: 271).

The official figures identify 2.33 ha as the median landholding for each family that benefited from the land reform, with 93,075 ha of land overall effectively allocated. The number of peasants who received land was given as 105,324, representing 10.7% of the island's population (state documents cited in *Riforma* 1950). The statistics fail to capture the overall distress that the agrarian reform brought about. The median land holding of my informants in 2009 was 3.5 ha of vineyards, a good portion of which could be traced back to 1953, passed on through inheritance. The statistics fail to capture the overall distress that the agrarian reform brought about.

Almost all my peasant informants from Alto Belice and specifically from San Giovanni were heirs to land tracts their parents had acquired through the agrarian reform. The overall positive memory of 'the shifting point', as some locals called the break-up of the latifundo, is reinforced by the relatively atypical position of San Giovanni on the agrarian reform map as one of the few 'islands' in Sicily that benefited from 'state-funded modernisation (planning and investment)' (Finley et al. 1986: 219). For Finley et al., overall, 'though conservative, particularly in their failure to encourage cooperatives, the laws of 1950 did induce change and perhaps 750,000 acres of new farms were created as a direct result' (Finley et al. 1986: 219). Other historians (Renda 1976) are equally sympathetic to the reform. By contrast, a number of anthropologists and sociologists regard the reform in Sicily as a 'failure' (Schneider and Schneider 1996: 250–54), 'a failed *land* reform' which had 'political intentions' (Blok 1974: 79) or an 'anti-reform' or 'counter-reform' (Santino 2000), some making links to critiques of South American agrarian reforms (Gledhill 1991).

My argument follows the latter line of analysis, contributing reflections on the characteristics of the policy behind the reform both for the 'revolutionary' and 'communist' San Giovanni (so deeply entrenched in peasant and antimafia struggles) and for Sicily at large. The agrarian reform is important for my thesis because of the overall shift in class balances it created and – mainly – because it eliminated grassroots cooperativism

altogether. In this thesis, I pay attention to unplanned and unintended consequences of state action. However, what here seems an unintended consequence of state policy was in fact thoroughly planned. Alongside the immediate (relatively fair, albeit limited) land distribution consequence of the agrarian reform there was an intended one (break-up of cooperativism) that had longer term, enduring and politically important impacts on Sicily: the main – and entirely intended – result of the agrarian reform was to destroy radical *bracciante* cooperativism through fragmenting land into family tracts. Pratt makes a similar case for the 1953 reform in Tuscany, where ‘a class of family members emerged not through market forces but through the direct action of the state’ (1994: 63), arguing that the de-radicalisation of the PCI-sympathetic ex-sharecroppers was the political aim of the land reform.

Moreover, during the years of turbulence that preceded the reform, many large estates had already split into peasant leaseholds. By dividing their property among relatives, landlords escaped the effects of the legislation (Blok 1974: 77–79; Mack Smith 1968). Therefore, the latifundo were only nominally broken up; in fact, most (absentee) wealthy families retained the land (Blok 1966). Their large estates were dissolved but the local class structure and de facto family power over large tracts of land was largely left unchallenged. The reform pacified a revolutionary peasantry: as it influenced class relations, the peasantry antimafia mobilisation itself changed, soon after the reform took place. As most of my interlocutors were born after 1953, they were brought up in smallholder families and began to mobilise around producer-based cooperativism as the way to tackle the loss of control over the means of production that the reform had inflicted on their fathers’ generation. Gaining not only access to markets but bargaining power became the aim in the new context, and this meant sidelining brokers, the role that mafia had come to monopolize. In the remainder of this chapter, I show how this took place.

### **3.2.2. 'Senza!' brokers and cooperative wineries (1960s)**

Viticulture, people's main occupation at my ethnographic research site, is central to my research. While the Alto Belice area also comprises villages such as Curriuni, traditionally focused on cereal-centred agriculture, in San Giovanni, the overwhelming majority of my local informants in and around the antimafia cooperatives were families committed to monocrop viticulture for generations. As wineries are the outcome of historical interactions between culture, politics, kinship and economy, looking at cooperative wineries allows us to examine the richness of social relations of production. I show that peasant integration into broader organisational structures took place through struggles to organise the vinification processes. This was pivotal for political alliances and relationships both *against* the local mafia. Exploitation by mafia brokerage and the political commitment of some locals produced local moves towards cooperativism, as peasants sought to reach urban markets. The cooperative winery is the main focus of my analysis, as the basic unit of production around which interests of various social groups and individuals overlapped. Through it, I trace political mobilisation and antimafia organisation.

Understanding Alto Belice requires looking closely at the social conduits of change and economic development related to vinification. *Sangiovannari* viticulturers set up institutions to integrate the production and commercialisation processes, establishing cooperative wineries for grape processing and engaging with the wine trade. Before it could reach markets, wine had to be produced and viticulture peasants focused first on the process of transforming the fruit of the land into a finished product, identifying common ownership of technological means to make wine at reduced costs as the way forward: viticulturers organised themselves collectively while retaining their families' economic 'autonomy',<sup>14</sup> as informants put it, guaranteed through the land reform distribution of

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<sup>14</sup> On the autonomy of the peasant household, see the vast discussion stemming from Chayanov (1986 [1925]) and Lenin (2004 [1899]), effectively problematised by Gavin Smith, who shows that 'autonomous'

vineyards. In this way, they continued the communitarian legacy of the *braccianti* movement, while building on the new property dynamics instituted by the agrarian reforms. The ideology of class was now linked to the ‘autonomy’ of the household, as noted in a historical ethnography of a viticulture economy in Southwestern Sicily (Schneider and Schneider 1996).

People committed to vine cultivation in Alto Belice experienced a fairly rapid transition from being *braccianti* to occupying (unstable) positions in the new class formations. In guaranteeing a piece of vineyard to each family, the agrarian reform had tackled only one economic grievance. The problem, which inspired cooperative wineries, was the speculative power that the mafia exercised in determining the price of the grapes. Even in the latifundist period, a rising class had moved out of rent-capitalism into becoming middlemen (Blok 1974: 67), setting the price of grapes (Davis 1981; Bandiera 2003a; 2003b). Schneider and Schneider, in the context of monocrop agriculture in Sicily, call this mafia activity ‘broker capitalism’ (1976: 160). Hence the impetus for establishing viticulture cooperatives:<sup>15</sup> it guaranteed a piece of vineyard to each family. Viticulturers still needed to process the produce; the establishment of cooperative wineries came as an outcome of this concern.

In Alto Belice, ‘broker capitalism’ was identified with the figure of the *senzale*, central to local configurations of the hinterland’s integration into urban markets. The *senzali* worked for wine merchants in Palermo, Rome or abroad, dictating price levels and buying the harvests of independent producers at low prices. They acted coercively but also aimed to create a relative degree of consensus; this helped them coordinate with each other and

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peasants pursue their livelihoods in a multiplicity of practices (1989); I take up this problematic ethnographically in Chapter 5. Chayanov influenced Sahlins’ concept of the ‘domestic mode of production’ (1972) but has also been criticised (Harris 1984), and since then by many feminist anthropologists (see the discussion in Narotzky 1997, especially pp. 129-137). Gudeman’s model formulated around the ‘base’ of the ‘house’ is more useful here, although he also speaks of subsistence, which is impossible in viticulture, as the produce is not edible; similarly for coffee producers (Roseberry 1983).

<sup>15</sup> Of course, vinification was irrelevant to peasants before the reform, as they did not own land or produce.

rendered them systemic to the functioning of wine's economy. This coordination led different mafia clans to come together in Cosa Nostra (Lodato 2006), guaranteeing efficiency for their brokerage. After the agrarian reforms, therefore, *mafiosi* clans and their affiliates shifted from controlling people's labour to acting as middlemen between producers and the market. In Alto Belice, to this day, these middlemen are called *senzali*.

Threatened by low prices and a non-existent bargaining power, peasants, who themselves or through their broader families (genealogically and laterally) had participated in struggles as *braccianti*, faced new form of dependence in the late 1950s through senzali control of prices and markets. This gave rise to further struggles that aimed to address market insecurity. The peasant movement recuperated, almost within a generation, the experience of the *bracciante* mobilisations. Change in landed property relations in Sicily did not result in shifts in wealth distribution (Schneider and Schneider 2006). The experience of the land occupations and the mafia violence against them had crafted a movement that mobilised anti-mafia sentiments. In viticulture, produce processing helped to transform this antimafia social dynamism of land-owning peasants. The winery substituted land as the resource around which peasants' collective claims were formulated: the peasant movement therefore became a massive social participation for cooperation in reaching urban markets with their wine), avoiding *mafiosi* brokers.

### **3.2.3. The peasant movement cooperative winery Sancipiriddu**

The cooperative winery Sancipiriddu in the village of San Cipiriddu, at the outskirts of San Giovanni, established in 1968, was the main outcome of the cooperative movement's mobilisation, and the majority of locals soon joined it. At the time of fieldwork, the winery had 800 members. Trade unionists I spoke with described this huge enterprise as 'the FIAT of our area', – 'the main source of income for locals' as well as social integration through labour. The winery became, for people in Alto Belice, a means of community-building and policy making, which also influenced their political representation.



The cooperative movement and, with that, the antimafia mobilisation of the peasantry, peaked in establishing the Sancipiriddu. Giulio Rillo, the middle-aged incumbent president of Sancipiriddu, spoke to me of its origins:

The Sancipiriddu winery comes from the '60s ... it gathered around it the communists of the area; my father was also there. Italiano<sup>16</sup> together with 30 other people, communists and not, created this cooperative, because in the area there were people buying grapes from the producer to determine its price, directing everything ... there were those people of the area, we call them *i senzali*... today they call them brokers ... Well, the famous *senzale* decided the price ... the word [*senzale*], translated from Arabic, means 'people roaming like this', tradesmen. So, they always decided who acquired the grape – most often they were linked to the mafia, they were *mafiosi*. This is the reason people made the coop, basically, to avoid the *senzali* activity.

Becoming a cooperative member of the Sancipiriddu winery entailed integrating into political participation, guided for three decades (until the PCI disbanded in 1991) by the communist party. Similarly, in Tuscany, the PCI's support contributed to the emergence of formal cooperatives (Pratt 1994: 73). The offspring of a vanguard commitment of local communist peasants, with immediate experiences of mafia violence and family memories of the *Fasvi*, Sancipiriddu began as the cooperative attempt of a few families and spread through the area through kinship and friendship ties (Terranova 2006). It started to grow in the early 1970s, largely as part of PCI policies, attracting state funding aimed at displacing the role of mafia and incorporating peasants into the political system, and, partly containing the mafia's influence. This was partly due to the alliance with the village branch of the CGIL union (affiliated to the PCI), which lobbied the party for support. The cooperative thus had grown *out of* a political movement, established itself *through* political institutions and played a central role in integrating people *into* political parties.

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<sup>16</sup> As portrayed in the book-homage to him entitled *The Man of The Vines (L'uomo delle vigne*, Terranova 2006), Pino Italiano, 82 when I met him, was still loyal to the PCI, which he thought was capable of antimafia struggle.

The integration of producers into cooperativism generated representatives within the peasant movement who translated this momentum into rural political and administrative power. Since their inception in the 1960s, cooperative-wineries have been led by people with explicit political commitments, in Palermo and beyond. Nationally, the cooperative movement developed through two opposed routes: red cooperativism, supported by Legacoop and the PCI, and white cooperativism, sustained by Unicoop and DC. Industrial sociology has shown that cooperatives, fundamental to Italian capitalism, have supported small-scale entrepreneurship throughout Italy, alongside local administrations (Trigilia 1983; 1986) and family networks (Blim 1990). What is distinctive about Alto Belice is that Sancipiriddu's links to PCI political patronage was in pursuit of further protection against the mafia.<sup>17</sup> In this way, peasant organisations sought to de-provincialise their concerns with mafia intimidation, making sure these concerns are represented on state level. Contemporary antimafia cooperatives continue to seek such patronage today and Legacoop and CGIL suggest to them new people to recruit as cooperative members.

Acquiring positions in local political echelons, or getting involved in the Sancipiriddu winery, in turn implied being constantly exposed to mafia retaliations, a danger recognised in the way people spoke of communism using idioms of bravery as well as ideology<sup>18</sup> The local experience of communism and antimafia was expressed in different but inter-relating idioms, communism here functioning as a moral discourse. Interviewing peasants who had been militant for red cooperativism in their youth, I found they used terms like 'courage' or 'manliness' to describe their 1960s and 1970s 'communist' commitment. The development of local communism is informed by reputations for being

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<sup>17</sup> Analogies can be drawn with the similar activity of most administrators of the current antimafia cooperatives, as per sections 5.3 and 4.1. Specifically in 4.3, I critique the notion of political patronage in the contemporary antimafia cooperatives.

<sup>18</sup> See also 4.2 for an ethnographic discussion of idioms of bravery in current cooperatives.

‘courageous’, still recognised today (Li Causi 1993). Communism, akin to cooperativism, and existing alongside it, is a ‘modular’ notion: a standardised political concept that adapts to the specifics (including antimafia struggle) of Sicily’s historical and geographical context. People involved in the antimafia cooperatives today, in employing a vaguely leftist rhetoric, draw upon the ‘thin red lines’ they feel they have inherited from previous decades.

As mentioned, Pino Italiano was the most influential communist peasant organiser, establishing the Valle Mato cooperative in 1963, which evolved into the Sancipiriddu in 1968. His commitment to anti-broker organisation established him as an outspoken antimafia leader as well. He became the first president of Sancipiriddu in 1968, keeping the position until 2000 when he nominated Rillo as his successor. They both became mayors of San Cipiriddu, for 12 years overall. Rillo was himself the son of an influential communist peasant, active in the constitution of the Sancipiriddu winery. The management of the winery remained shared between the two families from 1968 and until today, a policy that is branded as ‘Stalinist’ by many young peasants today. Reflecting on Pino, in interviews Rillo described him as a ‘life teacher’ and a ‘benefactor whom I have followed since my youth’. The winery presidents often suffered mafia intimidations in the 1970s and 1980s, which escalated in the violence of the early 1990s: in 1994, the San Cipiriddu mafia clan Agrigento burnt the cars and country homes of the then mayor Rillo and his deputy mayor Italiano. Local unionists insist these represented the mafia policy of destroying ‘the Sancipiriddu consensus’. The agents of the Lavoro e Altro and the Falcone cooperatives issued frequent statements in support of Sancipiriddu. Before they set up Centopassi, their own winery, in 2009, the antimafia cooperatives used Sancipiriddu for their vinification, choosing it for political reasons as their members felt a ‘political kinship to the old generation’, as Piero, the cooperatives’ 35-year-old agronomist told me. This suggests a certain historical continuity within the antimafia cooperativist movement, as I discuss in the closing section of this chapter.

The peasant consensus formed around the Sancipiriddu<sup>19</sup> thus implies that the efforts to form a cooperative winery were undertaken in order to sideline mafia brokerage and gain direct access to markets and to consolidate political alliances capable of guaranteeing long-term security against mafia *senz'ali*. Pratt argues that consensus around the PCI meant that social relations were experienced under a communist umbrella (2003: 73). Correspondingly, it should be emphasised that the politicised antimafia movement was organically rooted in relations of production (as inflected by Gramsci 1972): neither the outcome of urban intellectual organisation nor an offspring of the middle classes, it was the result of collective responses to mafia broker capitalism. These responses affected both cooperativism and antimafia politics and constituted a constant backdrop against which antimafia cooperatives still operate today, and to which my informants made constant references. In the case of Sancipiriddu, the antimafia movement shaped relations of production, distribution, and indeed cooperativism, while antimafia politics, since the 'recuperation' of the Sancipiriddu winery, reflected its values: leftist politics combined with peasant autonomy, but signifying a withdrawal from immediate post-war claims to revolutionary transformation and collective use of land.

With the passing of time peasant autonomy became problematic: the mounting crisis of the management of the cooperative winery seemed irresolvable at the time of fieldwork. Families' pressing need for waged work contributed to contemporary antimafia cooperatives stressing their role as offering employment and framing cooperativism *as (paid) work*. In the 1980s, although political clientelism (initially advantageous to most producers, through the *Sancipiriddu*) had persisted, remuneration of producers was becoming increasingly unsatisfactory. Anthropological studies have stressed the perils that common ownership of *some* of the means of production entails for peasants' real

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<sup>19</sup> The actual mechanics of coop wineries were simple: each family harvests their own grapes which they did not sell on the market but put together in making wine on a collective vinification site.

autonomy. Anthropologists influenced by Marxism have underlined, in these processes, peasants' 'subsumption to capital' (Narotzky 2001), their 'super-exploitation' as peasants semi-proletarianised by merchant capital (Roseberry 1978; 1983, 1989), and exploitation in class-informed patronage (Li Causi 1980). These ethnographies suggest similarities with Sicily, involving stages of political mediation among hinterland, city, region and state encountered elsewhere in the Mediterranean too (Ghezzi 2007; Narotzky and Smith 2006; Levy 1996). Similarly to post-Portella mafia aggression in Alto Belice, memories of Francoist violence in Spain impacted on people's political activity ('becoming *políticos*') (Narotzky and Smith 2006); having depoliticising effects on cooperatives (Narotzky 1997: 190), which came to reflect images of bureaucracy rather than reciprocal links between members (Smith 1999: 179). However in Sicily, sidelining the mafia, contributed to a politicisation of the peasantry, organised in cooperative wineries.

The involvement of state funding in cooperative wineries was fundamental to party politics in the area. The 'presence of the state', that my informants so heatedly debated, is historically shown through public funding of cooperative wineries – since the 1970s and till now – and talk of patronage. Political alliances are visible in cooperatives proposing different models of production corresponded to competing political parties' funding policies. In their turn, parties were integrated in broader balances of Cold War affiliations, for instance the PCI propagating the 'Communist World'. The Sancipiriddu winery sprang out of claims and horizontal relations of the peasant movement, incorporated in leftist party politics. The Sancipiriddu 'consensus' is an interesting case of rural politics and economics marked by the developments of peasants' organisation to combat the *mafiosi's* activity. This model is less evident in the area's 'white' coop winery, owned and controlled by a family who retrospectively criticise political intervention in cooperativism.

### **3.2.4. The Miccis: cooperative winery *Fusa***

Before I first visited Mario Micci, the richest wine producer of the area, local peasants told me the most contradictory stories about him as having colluded with or persecuted by the mafia. As I sat in his comfortable living room, he very quickly launched into criticisms of Sancipiriddu: ‘the politics informing the organisation of production could not survive in contemporary times’, adding that ‘cooperatives are associated with the state, they have always been assistentialist,<sup>20</sup> corporatist ... they formed a parasitic class, which was receiving Cold War subsidies for 40 years.’ His family were pioneers of ‘white’ cooperation. The Micci family, heading *Fusa*, the other great coop winery of the area established in the late ‘60s, moved out of the state subsidy system through a joint venture with their privately owned company, *Trasi*, in the late 1990s. The firm was the most important wine entrepreneur of the village, permanently listed among the most successful Italian wine firms.

Mario, a 50-year-old single man, affluent yet inconspicuously integrated in the village, lived at his family home with his elderly father, a rich farmer, cooperative broker and peasant organiser, who positioned himself ‘in the tradition of Sicilian *country gentlemen*’ (my emphasis). The walls of the grand room where we met were covered with the portraits of family ancestors, arranged in genealogical order. Mario explained in detail:

That person, bearing the same name as mine, was the mayor of the village in 1830; that one next to him started producing in bulk for export to England in 1840, using land in *emphiteusis*,<sup>21</sup> which was first acquired by that gentleman over there in the oldest portrait, painted in 1810.

Mario and his brother had studied medicine at the prestigious Padua University, just like their father; but ‘the soil called us back’, he told me as he served coffee. I noted the class-inflected aversion that *mafiosi* provoked in the Miccis. As Mario put it, alongside the

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<sup>20</sup> He means that they depended on state assistance, through funding.

<sup>21</sup> The system of *emphiteusis* was important in the rise of the rural bourgeois class in Sicily (Blok 1974: 40).

‘country gentlemen’, a parasitic criminal class had started to thrive after the Risorgimento in the 1860s. He described how the *mafiosi* (whom he called ‘stinking shepherds’<sup>22</sup>) threatened his father with kidnapping his children (Mario and his brother) when they were infants. The boys had been sent to boarding school in Florence and visited Sicily once a year, during which time they were confined to the house.

Mario had acquired the position of winery president from his father, and in 1997 encouraged the integration of the production process between *Fusa* and *Trasi*, establishing an assembly contract with the family’s private company. Despite this transformation, the Miccis boast that *Fusa* is still a healthy ‘white cooperative’, which has countered Sancipiriddu and united part of the anti-communist ‘catholic world’ (Trigilia 1986). The family takes pride in saying they were ‘the *IBM* of the area,<sup>23</sup> not its FIAT’, distinguishing their cooperative from the Sancipiriddu. Maurizio described the family coalition that created *Maranfusa*:

Maranfusa was born out of my father’s plan to create a fortified farmhouse (*masseria*) .... Instead of building the *masseria* like a landlord, my father convinced 500 families, who were neither *mafiosi* nor communist but sympathetic to centrist politics, and united them under the umbrella of solidarity and profit. This has represented for us *a web of consensus* ... that saved us from getting killed, as this web created an invisible army .... Touching us like a family meant touching a web of consensus, an ensemble of families with common interests .... And it was, until a certain period, counterproductive for the criminals to dare an act of this kind; they were committing intimidating acts anyway, but never anything really significant. [emphasis added]

This ‘white cooperativist’ model conceived and put in place by a bourgeois family of San Giovanni and countering the ‘red cooperativist’ model of the Sancipiriddu winery will be discussed further in the conclusion to this chapter, alongside broader ideas, to

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<sup>22</sup> He used the term ‘*pecorai puzzolenti*’. Brusca, in his autobiography, complains that urban *mafiosi* and upper class Palermitans alike called Alto Belice *mafiosi* ‘villagers’ or ‘peasants’ (*viddani*) (1999).

<sup>23</sup> Maurizio, interestingly, used the mafia-informed term ‘territorio’ (territory) to mean ‘area’, a term popular among local peasants as well.

suggest two competing forms of social consensus that tackled, to an extent, the mafia's broker power and political influence in the area.

### **3.2.5. The contemporary context: land confiscations and antimafia cooperatives**

In this final section of the historical ethnography, and segueing into the ethnographically informed account of contemporary antimafia cooperatives offered in Chapters 4 to 7, I shall briefly show how these contemporary cooperatives relate to the older ones, and how the history presented above links to the key issue of confiscations of mafia land in such a way that the historical process can be seen, as members say, 'peaking in the contemporary cooperatives'.<sup>24</sup>

As explained in the Introduction (1.2.1), all the contemporary cooperatives examined in this thesis cultivate land confiscated from the Alto Belice mafia by the state between 1996 and 2009 and, from 2000 onwards, bestowed on the cooperatives via the Consortium 'Development and Legality'. Interestingly, one cannot help but see the exciting continuities with history: the work of the Consortium in distributing the confiscated land resources after 2000 amounts to a small-scale legal agrarian reform.<sup>25</sup> Reading Consortium leaflets on 'reconstituting unlawfully usurped land back to the collectivity and the community' (Consortio 2001), in the light of my informants' approving views of peasants 'communal struggles', I propose that the confiscations draw, ideologically, on the revolutionary interlude of the late 1940s, the only period in Sicilian history where land was collectively held. The identification of community and state is thus partly rooted in this reading of the historical circumstance. Moreover, judging from the Consortium's rhetoric, when the state appropriated the assets from mafia landowners, this land confiscation took

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<sup>24</sup> See Appendix 6 for information on contemporary cooperatives' capital, and production scale.

<sup>25</sup> As noted in the introduction, after the Consortium was set up in 2000, all confiscated land within the eight municipalities of Alto Belice was delegated to distribute the land and oversee its use. The municipalities retain ownership of the confiscated assets, the cooperatives holding only their usufruct.



place on a unique basis. The state meant to redistribute land back to the community in a Polanyist reversal of the enclosure of the commons (2001), a reversal that had not taken place after the war, much to peasants' disappointment. In this picture the Consortium president, Matteo (drawing on what sounds like a Marxist account of primitive accumulation<sup>26</sup>), argued that state intervention corrects the *mafiosi* 'usurping' of the land, stealing what was 'originally' in the common domain and available to all. Arlacchi's extensive arguments on the theme of 'mafia primitive capital accumulation' (Arlacchi 1983; 1986; see also Cacciola 1984) seem retrospectively highly relevant to the state confiscations project still ongoing at the time of writing of this thesis, 16 years after its inception.

As discussed in Chapter 1, after the mid 1990s the nexus between the state and Cosa Nostra (when their relationship shifted from connivance to conflict, triggered by an escalation of violence caused by Alto Belice mafia (Lodato 2001)), most local *mafiosi* were arrested, some jailed for life. Most arrests took place in 1996, the year the law on the 'social use' of the confiscations was passed. As noted many times earlier, the idea of 'restituting the mafia land back to the community' (Libera 2010) was promoted by civil society mobilisation, 'spearheaded by the 'urban antimafia movement' (Schneider and Schneider 2003), and peaking in 1996 with the passing of Law No. 109 of 1996.). The first land plot to be 'restituted', i.e. allocated to a social cooperative, was a vineyard previously owned by Totò 'The Beast' Riina, in Corleone, in 1999, bestowed on the Lavoro e Altro cooperative. Following the Consortium's expansionary promotion of the need for 'more cooperatives' to accommodate the land 'restituted to the community', the Falcone, Borsellino and Liberanima cooperatives were born. Two older local cooperatives, Akragas and Paradiso, set up in 1998 before the Consortium came into being, had ceased to exist at the time of fieldwork (see 4.2).

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<sup>26</sup> Marx Capital, volume I, part VIII, Chapter 26: The Secret of Primitive Accumulation (2008: 363-366).

In Alto Belice, land confiscations hit *mafiosi* such as Riina, Brusca, Di Maggio, Genovese (all imprisoned for life between 1995 and 1998,<sup>27</sup> or under witness protection status at the time of fieldwork). All these prominent Cosa Nostra clan leaders had been involved in heroin trafficking and had committed, or commissioned, hundreds of assassinations between 1982 and 1996. There were also other *mafiosi* (such as Netti and Baffi), who in 2009, while I was in the field, had already been released from prison, as they had never committed violent criminal acts. Such persons' mafia status was disputed by locals; they were employers and, in our contacts, told me they thought of themselves as mainly 'peasant entrepreneurs'. However, they had also invested in real estate locally and in landownership abroad (predominantly in Romania). Some local land holdings remained in *mafiosi* hands (see Chapter 6).

Locals often mentioned to me how San Giovanni was called 'Kabul' or 'Beirut' in Palermo during the mid 1990s: Giovanni Brusca was still on the loose and even the Army was stationed in the village to tackle the mafia, with temporary curfews imposed (Corrado 1998). By comparison, my fieldwork took place in a period of virtually no mafia crime and, indeed, no protection racketeering. While I was in San Giovanni, 'only' two mafia assassinations took place, when a Brusca clan member exterminated a rival clan. The decline of violence, however, did not imply that cooperative members were not afraid of *some* retaliations for the fact that they were cultivating confiscated property. Interestingly, the fear of violence was also inversely proportionate to the degree of familiarity of a member with the local context. Specifically, administrators of the cooperatives were more sensitive to minor instances of mafia threats and, local workers argued, 'used them' to attract media attention to the antimafia cooperatives.

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<sup>27</sup> An excellent account of arrests and trials of *mafiosi* in the mid-1980s is provided by Falcone (1986). We lack a comprehensive work accounting for more recent developments, although Lodato (2001) does offer interesting background on the Alto Belice arrests.

An example of this is how the Borsellino administrators reacted to a fire in their olive grove. Although the *Carabinieri* ruled out the possibility of mafia arson, a rock concert was quickly arranged to provide moral and material support to the ‘coop under threat’: organised locally, the concert took place within a month of the event. Featuring rock star Ligabue (the Italian equivalent of Bon Jovi), it was a success and yielded a 50.000 € profit. The singer publicly proclaimed his solidarity with the coop and symbolically planted a young olive tree in the grove, surrounded by journalists and Libera activists. However, the gesture did not find unanimous support across Pio members at the time: ‘The point is to make money out of agriculture, not to make a fuss,’ Manto, a Borsellino worker told me.

The Falcone was established in 2001, after a public competition organised by the Consortium, and the Borsellino in 2006 in the same way. The Lavoro e Altro dated from earlier, even before the Consortium itself, having been set up in 1998, and had been allocated land from the municipality of Curriunni. The overall political situation, informed by the antimafia-sympathetic, urban civil society mobilisations of the 1990s, had created an ostensible antimafia consensus among local politicians; however, as I witnessed myself, this was often debatable. For instance, Malva, the mayor of San Cipiriddu and also the Consortium’s president (in 2009), dined with local *mafioso* Baffi (see sections 5.3 and 7.2) while Tazio, the mayor of Rocca and a Consortium member, was arrested for mafia affiliation in 2006 (see Appendix 4).

Thus there are reasons to qualify the picture of the historical process peaking in the contemporary cooperatives. Overall, despite the claims to ‘continuity’ with the struggles of the antimafia peasant movement, this inspiration was ideological rather than direct. None of the many people who had been involved in previous social or specifically antimafia struggles was involved in the newly created cooperatives. However, Sancipiriddu people like Rillo supported the new cooperatives, as did most trade unionists. Their inspiration from ‘red’ rather than ‘white’ cooperativist models came specifically from their

administrators' ideological sympathy with the historical peasant movement, their present-day collaboration with 'red' consumer coops in Emilia (Northern Italy) and involvement in progressive Palermitan civil society. As a proportion of the local population, participation in the cooperatives was small (some 150 people's livelihoods were immediately associated to income from the cooperatives, when in San Giovanni only, the permanent population was ca. 4500 people). Unlike the history they drew from and referred to, these cooperatives could not accommodate massive popular participation and were not grassroots organizations.

The social struggles of the antimafia movement today do not confront mafia's violence, although mafia agents are still active (see, for example, 6.3). Rather than having to face mafia patronage or brokerage, the cooperatives are *taking over the mafia's control over* material resources. The struggle is now around the usufruct rights to land and the ways that is managed vis-à-vis the local social arrangements around the land. The struggles around usufruct are akin to the pre-agrarian-reform mobilisations, while attempts at commercialisation are akin to post-reform. Most important, struggles against the mafia now have different priorities. While in the past cooperatives were channels to *avoid* mafia influence (*gabellotti* patrons, *senzali* brokers), antimafia cooperativism today aims at *attacking* mafia: antimafia has become the end of cooperativism, not its means.

## **Conclusion**

Gramsci described pre-World War II alliances in Italy characterising Southern Italy in terms of an 'historical bloc', 'the complex, contradictory and discordant *ensemble* of the superstructures in the reflection of the *ensemble* of the social relations of production' (Gramsci 2005: 366). However, by the 1950s the continuing relevance of this term for Sicily is debatable (Lupo 1981). The *bracciante* movement had claimed a fair redistribution of land in ways more radical than the break-up of the latifundo instituted by the agrarian

reform, which nevertheless did change land tenure. For Gramsci, in the real, historical landscapes of power that come into being in particular times and places, certain *ways of understanding the world*, are not merely conjunctural but may be distinguished as ‘organic’ to the extent that they link to, and effect significant change in, a society’s economic base (Gramsci 2010).

Specific ‘cultural’ phenomena in specific cultural contexts are structural and organic (Crehan 2002). In that respect, class opposition to mafia manipulation (through patronage before the agrarian reform, brokerage after) was integrated within the peasant movement and the formation of the cooperatives. However, it is interesting to consider what is at stake in the term ‘cultural’: antimafia mobilisation, rather than being a conscious political choice, became ‘a way of life’ that both adapted and shaped the peasantry’s broader conditions of life in Alto Belice through a communism informed by bravery idioms, party loyalties and the favourable legal and political climate related to Gullo’s policies in the 1940s.

The mafia’s continuity as an organisation and its strategic transformation from a pre-agrarian-reform network of violent *gabelloti* patrons to a post-agrarian-reform nexus of coordinated *senzali* brokers was crucial for the intersections of political economy and culture in Alto Belice. Mafia activity and peasant organisation against it, – as well as the local interpenetration of antimafia and cooperativism ideals – have conditioned local particularities of cooperativism and political culture. This interpenetration had the effect that, although developed in different configurations between state, mafia and peasants, the cooperative organisation of production and the antimafia mobilisation were always almost inseparable. These values interacted through a range of configurations involving the state and the markets and were formed through peasant struggles, originally centred on accessing land before the agrarian reform and, after it, on accessing markets. Contesting *mafiosi* shaped the peasant movement *as antimafia*, contributed to the establishment of local

cooperative wineries and, through them, to links to wider political structures, such as the PCI.

The historically contingent character of the organisation of the local peasantry includes a range of actions and incorporates a variety of interrelated factors: flight in reaction to violence, mass land occupations, formation of cooperatives based on communalist ideas, creation of cooperative wineries. Similarly, they frequently organised in terms of communist politics, fused with antimafia militancy. The antimafia phenomenon arose amidst the tensions between social movements (focused on acquiring land or accessing markets) and mafia. It partly inspired the cooperative organisation of different levels of production (grape cultivation before the reform; vinification after). In this way, Alto Belice's peasant integration into cooperative wineries entangled economy, politics and antimafia with each other.

To sum up, on a theoretical level, the historical discussion in this chapter has illuminated a number of points regarding cooperativism. My main argument is built on an analogy with Anderson's approach to nationalism as a 'modular' notion (2006), applied to cooperativism as well as to 'communism' in the Sicilian case. I have argued that the historical case of cooperativism in Sicily shows that specific circumstances on the ground (mafia activity and the peasant movement's antimafia responses) have rendered peasant cooperativism a practice both distinct in its Sicilian specificities *and* contextualised in two different circumstances in the history of Alto Belice. The first set of circumstances relates to communalist worker-based cooperativism (as per the 1940s), which drew on revolutionary legality to propose a reappropriation of the commons. The second set of circumstances relates to post-agrarian-reform producer-based cooperativism, premised on small-proprietor viticulturers. The 'modularity' of cooperativism as a cultural construct is thus, in Sicily, adapted to the circumstantial ideological weight it carried in these two different periods. Its ideology was, moreover, informed by antimafia commitment:

cooperativism became a model of organisation as well as an ideal of organising to avoid or confront the mafia, alongside exploitative landlords and distant urban markets. It has been ‘transplanted’ in the current configuration of antimafia cooperatives.

On an ethnographic level, I have underlined how the peasant movement engaged in different forms of cooperativism. Absentee landlords before the reform had *mafiosi* patrons (*gabellotti*) as their local middlemen. After the reform, *mafiosi* again occupied a middleman role but now as *senzali*, controlling local peasants’ access to markets, in terms of raw materials (grapes). The discussion elucidated the dialectics of politics and economics in the formation of cooperativism and of the antimafia movement in Alto Belice. I also showed how contemporary antimafia cooperatives capitalise on *both* traditions, the cooperativism of autonomous producers (as per the post-agrarian-reform scheme) *and* on the pre-agrarian-reform workers’ cooperativism. The commemorations, tourist initiatives and their general rhetoric draw on both these traditions: their members speak of ‘thin red lines’ linking these experiences. Importantly, though, contemporary antimafia cooperatives are not, as might have been expected, historical elaborations of the producer-based cooperativism of recent decades but, rather, resemble, in their organisational form, the worker-based cooperatives of the 1940s and even the 1890s. Their claims to ‘revolutionary legality’, their rhetoric of ‘reclaiming the commons’ and, the fact that they do not own the land they cultivate, having only usufruct rights, strongly echo (with some differences) older developments of Sicilian antimafia cooperativism. This resemblance is, importantly, utilised ideologically, by cooperative administrators. Organisationally, they are workers’ cooperatives with an explicit antimafia stance, more akin, on a superficial level, to Alto Belice cooperativism of the 1940s. At the same time, however, they retain elements of producers’ cooperativism in that they are supported by the state, in a configuration where politics shift against the mafia. They hence resemble the cooperativism of the 1960s and onwards.

In this chapter, I have also shown that the relations between ideological and/or kinship-based relationships (mafia and antimafia) and local economic models (different models of cooperative agriculture) developed against a backdrop of political struggles. I have suggested that the state has been filtered through various local institutions, including cooperatives and mafia. Using intertwined historicities of peasant associationism and political activity, I have shown how the organisation of social relations of production in Alto Belice has been formed, arguing that cooperativism, politics and antimafia interacted. Finally, I have analysed the relation between land tenure, and cooperative institutions in Alto Belice, that configure the background for antimafia cooperativism today. I have suggested that the main consequence of the agrarian reform (destroying cooperativism by fragmenting land into family-owned tracts) was not unintended ‘collateral damage’ of the reform but rather a well planned scheme. The revival of producers’ cooperativism in recent decades is echoed in the contemporary antimafia cooperatives: in the following chapter, I shall enquire into the modes they were constituted.



# Chapter 4

## *Raccomandazioni* and ‘Networking’ in Recruitment: Different Spheres of Relatedness in the Cooperatives

### Introduction

This chapter examines the ways antimafia cooperatives recruited people and the relationships between cooperative members. It focuses on two different forms of relatedness and horizontality in the cooperatives. The way in which the cooperatives were set up involved the coexistence of two domains: working-class households in Alto Belice and middle-class networks in Palermo. The ethnographic narrative offered here addresses the way these domains related to the two-tiered organisation of the cooperatives’ members in terms of the administrative and manual workforce teams<sup>1</sup>, focusing on what I call their incompatible ‘spheres’ of relatedness and their associated idioms.<sup>2</sup> Here I follow David Graeber’s understanding of ethnographic writing as ‘aiming to describe the contours of a social and conceptual universe in a way that is at once theoretically informed, but not, in itself simply designed to advocate a single argument or theory’ (2009a: viii). Hoping to avoid such partiality in its ethnographic supporting evidence, this chapter does put forward specific arguments. Firstly, I propose that two different idioms of relatedness (*‘raccomandazioni’* through kinship and ‘networking’ through politicised liaisons), granted people access to cooperatives, transforming local ideas of kinship. Secondly, these idioms were constituted through different ‘spheres’ of relatedness, which cannot communicate across the cooperatives’ teams.

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<sup>1</sup> As in most of the thesis, in this chapter, ‘workers’ or ‘manual workforce’ are terms used to encompass both daily workers and member-workers).

<sup>2</sup> Idioms here imply not only oral communications but also broader practices of transmission of meaning among people. They are ways people convey meaningful transmissions (of resources, or ideas), as per Carsten’s idioms of relatedness (2000: 24).

I characterise the different linkages operative in the recruitment practices of cooperatives in terms of ‘relatedness’, using this term in Carsten’s sense, as ‘more inclusive than kinship’ (Carsten 2000: 4),<sup>3</sup> and thus highly appropriate to Alto Belice, to include both familial/kin-based relations and social ‘networking’. This allows me to put the otherwise strongly contrasted recruitment practices of cooperative administrators and workers on a comparable footing, understood in an integrated sense as involving different modes of relatedness. I shall use ‘kinship’ only to define very specific cases akin to the Schneiderian paradigm (1980). Both mediation (*raccomandazione*<sup>4</sup>) and networking (*circolo* or *network* in Italian) are emic terms used by those involved in recruitment practices in cooperatives. However, their relatedness norms and idioms were directly opposed: non-kinship networking for administrators, kinship-based mediation for workers. *Raccomandazioni* were based on kinship relations: local workers brought their relatives in the cooperatives. This dynamic idiom rearranged established ideas on kinship, creating what informants called ‘antimafia families’. Networking was premised on *the lack* of local kinship links. Administrators and the Consortium argued that only ‘virtuous social circles’ can constitute antimafia cooperatives. The ‘virtuous’ element here implies the absence of kinship-based recruitment. For this reason, I locate the meanings of relatedness in the prominent rhetoric linking kinship to mafia influence.

There has been a transformation in managing material resources (from mafia-controlled to state- and cooperatives-controlled management), which implies changes in people’s access to them. Since the setting up of the cooperatives, this change drew upon values that lay outside the domain of political economy, such as kinship (exclusion of up to

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<sup>3</sup> Carsten’s notion, based on the sharing, the transmission, of ‘substantial resources’ such as food (Carsten 1995) has come under criticism as it broadens the scope of kinship to such an extent that it includes ‘all sorts of relationships’ (Holý 1996: 168). I use the term ‘relatedness’ cautiously, to delineate the branch of relationships among locals in Alto Belice that are renegotiated through the job offers and the constant relations among homes/families and antimafia cooperatives, as well as to include non-kinship relationships among administrators from Palermo.

<sup>4</sup> *Raccomandazioni* is the plural form.

3<sup>rd</sup> degree kin in the cooperatives' recruitment) and ideology (recruitment on the basis of antimafia commitment). These ideas were codified in the regulations of the Consortium. I show that the recruitment included, on the one hand, the local manual workers' recommendations (*raccomandazioni*) for family members and, on the other, the Palermitan administrators' 'virtuous circles' of non-kinship networking. My analytical outlook juxtaposes networking and *raccomandazioni*, arguing that their complementary activity (being different forms of how people experienced their relatedness) staffed the cooperatives. As long as these two spheres of different relatedness (which corresponded to the two teams in the cooperatives' division of labour) were kept separate, there was stability in the recruitment process. However, when members of the cooperatives or politicians started to engage in *raccomandazioni*, conflicts emerged. Workers of the cooperatives thought that this vertically arranged clash of idioms (*raccomandazioni*/networking) constituted 'patronage'.

I have discussed, in 2.1 the centrality of 'horizontal' work relations' for cooperatives, to indicate equality among members, and of balance between the activity of a cooperative and the community in which it operates. I show that two different types of horizontalities (in the plural) developed in Alto Belice cooperatives. Contested relations *within* a group endorsed the same idioms of relatedness, while relations *between* groups produced conflict, understood as patronage. I argue that different groups were invoking different spheres of relatedness that barely communicated with each other, suggesting separate ways of envisioning moral economy, as well as different values.

The chapter develops in a threefold manner: it moves from what administrators called 'virtuous networking' to what workers called 'antimafia families' and from there to a discussion on patronage. I argue that the idioms of networking and *raccomandazioni* belong to different groups and cannot mingle. This is building an argument about cooperative horizontal relations, arranged in two different spheres, and expressed in two different relatedness idioms. The focus commences with Palermitan administrators, then moves to

the local manual workforce and wraps up with an analysis of internal conflicts caused by when local workers' relatedness idioms were used by administrators. Thus ultimately the separate spheres of relatedness of the two teams expressed in the different idioms of recruitment and contributing equally to the composition of antimafia cooperatives means that a general horizontality among cooperative members cannot be established.



**Photo 13:** Commercial fairs, family and enterprise: an instance where members of the two teams came together. Here, a manual worker (Adamo, with his daughter Marella) and an administrator (Giusy) co-host a stand with the products of the Falcone cooperative on display at a fair in Palermo.

## 4.1. Virtuous Networking: The Administrators

### 4.1.1. Networking versus kinship

Ernesto, 30 years old, the sales manager of Falcone, was enthusiastic about my presence in the office of the cooperatives, where I helped with chores many afternoons. As we were roughly the same age, he found our discussions stimulating and was willing to share information about his background. He was proud of the fact that he had been involved in political associations for a long time and was intrigued by my questions about his social networks. He told me in an interview:

I was involved in politics for many years [*ho fatto politica per molti anni*] and was active in associations in Palermo [*ho fatto associazionismo*]; I was also in the Union of my university department. But distributing flyers or organising a campaign is one thing; it is quite another to, ... you know, contribute to real change. Well, I knew Luca, I knew Libera in Palermo, I knew the association well; I knew Luca since forever as

we were friends, we did initiatives together ... we had undergone a great part of our experience together. We had met in the Left Youth [*Sinistra Giovanile*]; and then again later on, I had already done some stuff, the studies, had lived a bit abroad, I was already collaborating with Libera ... and a job opportunity [*una finestra*: literally, a window] opened in the cooperative. So, by the start of 2004 I became a volunteer member and then an admin member. I mean, with Luca it's like we shared our biographies. We share our cooperative biographies, but also what came before that.

Ernesto explicitly connected 'the cooperative ambience' to the development of the centre-Left and to his own personal, political and professional maturation process (his 'cooperative biography') in this environment, merging his different experiences to show a single trajectory, emphasizing especially his networking with Luca, the 35-year-old president of Falcone. He insisted, in our conversations, that these milieux 'guaranteed the antimafia principles'. Almost all administrators in the three cooperatives I studied came from Palermo and had no relatives in Alto Belice. In fact, the Consortium agents saw their lack of local kinship ties as an asset: the rhetoric of the Consortium, suspicious towards local kinship (associated with the problematic mafia tradition) found in them ideal examples of meritocratic excellence. Similarly, for the Consortium's director, Matteo: as the administrators came from outside Alto Belice, they were by definition immune to corruption, which they saw as linked to local kinship. In this way, the administrators distinguished themselves vertically from the locals, claiming that administrators were more committed to antimafia, partly due to their lack of kinship links in the area.

This was crucial in the matter of recruitment: Palermitan administrators considered that the reproduction of their teams should be completely dissociated from kinship connections. Unlike the cooperatives' manual workforce, made up of Alto Belice locals, they were suspicious of familial idioms and kinship ideologies, often mentioning how mafia

familialism – meaning ‘friends of friends’ and *comparatico*<sup>5</sup> relations – had damaged the area’s economic development. Among the administrators, by contrast, axes of what they called ‘networking’ prevailed, which they saw as appropriate to the specifically professional features of their role in the cooperatives’ distribution of labour. Their mechanisms of reproducing their team were thus developed outside the sphere of the home and kinship relations.

What, then, is the meaning of ‘networking’ and how did cooperative administrators sustain this idiom? Having grown up in Palermo, cooperative administrators shared common social milieux. All had higher education backgrounds and some had lived outside Sicily, indeed a few, such as Ernesto, outside Italy, for short periods. Fewer in number than the manual workers,<sup>6</sup> they were often single, and younger (all less than 40 years old). Unlike the manual workers, administrators did not have other jobs or income sources outside the cooperatives. They certainly had fewer responsibilities than their manual worker colleagues but only a few lived with their parents in Palermo and some had the burden of covering their rent. Some of them would inherit property from their parents (who were civil servants or employed in services, and not agriculturalists) but none owned land themselves.

Importantly, their remuneration from the cooperatives was on comparatively much better terms than that of their manual work colleagues, as they all had stable renewable contracts, whether permanent or short term (two years, for instance), (15 out of 25 administrators across the three cooperatives) and therefore could rely on a monthly wage of around 1,000–1,300 euros net (depending on the job post). Additionally, some

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<sup>5</sup> Research in Sicily (Schneider and Schneider 1976), Calabria (Arlacchi 1982) and Campania (Saviano 2006) has suggested that fictive kinship codes are partly evocative of mafia. The centrality of the godparenthood (*comparatico*) institution is one such concept (Holý 1996: 166; cf. Goody 1983).

<sup>6</sup> As suggested in Chapter 1, and explained in the next section, ‘manual workforce’ is the generic term I use to speak of both (daily) workers and member-workers, as they shared common experiences, their cooperative positions being more nominal than real in terms of pay and benefits. Their shared relatedness idiom adds to my overall decision to analytically approach them together. Their differences were not felt enough to constitute a further stratifications in the cooperatives, beyond the axis administrators/workers. Kinship links between member-workers and workers underlines this point, as shown below.

administrators, such as the Falcone and Borsellino cooperatives' public relations responsible Checcho, the sales managers, or the presidents of the three cooperatives, enjoyed job perquisites, especially travel. They often travelled to Emilia (in Northern Italy) to establish and maintain links with consumer coops to promote their produce, or elsewhere in Italy to promote the 'antimafia idea', invited by local boroughs, at events hosted by schools. In Alto Belice the cooperatives maintained the exclusively male tradition of manual farm work and so whereas the manual workforce were all male, in the administration teams, some women had key roles. For instance, the vice-presidents of both the Falcone and the Borsellino cooperatives were women in their early 30s.

Most administrators felt lucky to have a job in the first place.<sup>7</sup> Lacking material resources of their own, they compared themselves, financially and in terms of status, with their friends in Palermo, graduate youngsters seeking waged employment. Being employed by the antimafia cooperatives was a symbol of rank, typically recognised as important social capital within their social circles. Among people of the same background, most were seen as successful: meeting Ernesto, Claudia or Enza in Palermitan cafés in the weekends, I noted how their friends and partners thought that, in gaining jobs with the cooperatives, their university degrees were valued and valorised and that their jobs in the cooperatives were creative. Meeting Marelio's friends (university-educated males in their early 30s), I observed that they thought he was privileged to have a stable job.

Administrators often met outside work on occasions such as the Addiopizzo<sup>8</sup> feast or Libera's film evenings; several of their friends worked at these events. In the words of Checco, attending such events was not only political socialisation but also an ethical

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<sup>7</sup> Youth unemployment was 37.2% in Sicily at the time of fieldwork (ISTAT, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Addiopizzo is the name of a Sicilian civil society association catering for the horizontal organisation of retailers who adopt an 'anti-racketeering' policy, shopkeepers who refuse to pay racketeering money to the mafia. Today, the association has NGO status and 300 retailers subscribe to its principles. Even so, it is estimated that 80% of Palermo's retailers still pay the mafia's protection (ISTAT, 2009).

'obligation vis-à-vis their social allies' (such as the Addiopizzo). For most, their employment was continuous with their broader beliefs and ideas; working in the cooperative was 'more than *just* a job', as Mauro, the Falcone's marketing manager put it. It was even, as Ernesto told me, 'a mission' and 'a political project'. They took pride in acting according to the specific framework of regulations and ethics that set the official discourse of the cooperatives, a commitment to meritocracy and legality. In focus groups I organised, Ernesto solemnly stated that his job was 'also about ideology' and 'a certain mission'. Marelio added that they 'embodied' civil society principles for San Giovanni, in that way acting, 'as an adjunct to Libera'; in that respect, they expressed dominant ideas set by the Consortium 'Development and Legality', following its meritocracy-based, legalist agenda. Their private lives and their lives in the office were part of the same continuum.

Administrators thus saw themselves as 'professionals' and strongly believed that their teams (in the Falcone, the Lavoro e Altro and the Borsellino cooperatives) were based on 'meritocracy'. They even claimed that the very term 'networks' was an indication of merit, as it was distinct from terms like 'family' or 'friends': it was, as Checco told me, 'neutral'. Most administrators thought that any cooperative formed through and along friendship or kinship lines was in principle a 'failed case'. Matteo, the president of the Consortium, as well as the presidents of the cooperatives stressed to me that the experience of making a 'kinship-based' antimafia cooperativism in Alto Belice had been ill conceived. In fact, this explains why in 2001 the Consortium had closed the two small cooperatives Akragas and Paradiso, set up in 1998 without public controversy and cultivating confiscated land. Composed of local family members, they had worked alongside the Falcone in 2000. The Consortium took the decision to close them 'due to the messiness that the kin relations of their members brought about', as Matteo told me. In the case of Akragas, the family running the cooperative had become indebted to a bank and used their own familial assets to pay back their debts, ignoring the Consortium regulations, which did



not permit its cooperative to merge family capital and state (confiscated) assets. At the time of fieldwork, years after their cooperative had been dissolved, the members of the ‘Akragas coop family’, as they are known in the village, were still suffering major financial troubles. They refused to give me an interview. The father asked me to mention only that ‘the experience of the confiscated land has been disastrous for our family, and we need to keep it in the past, not to remember it’.

The case of Paradiso was even more dramatic; the data I have regarding it comes from the hearings of the Palermitan court that oversaw its case. Enrico, the son of the family running the cooperative, was a friend of a person related to a *mafioso*. The *mafioso* ‘recommended’ two people to a friend of Enrico and the friend convinced Enrico to hire them. When the Consortium found that people ‘affiliated’ to the mafia were hired, it immediately took back the confiscated plots from the cooperative. The family-based cooperative was soon shut down. The experiences of these two cooperatives exacerbated the Consortium agents’ mistrust of kinship relations.

In order to sideline kinship, Libera became the main channel for hiring and maintaining the administrative workforce. As part of their ‘professional skills’, administrators had to have activist credentials, obtained through what informants, such as Ernesto, called ‘association experience’ (*esperienza associazionista*). Such experience could include the Addiopizzo antimafia activism or showing motivation towards ethical business practice; for example, two administration members had Master’s degrees in ‘Corporate Social Responsibility’. As noted above, when Ernesto explained the social networks in which he was embedded, he took pride in stressing his relations with Luca, the Falcone president (‘we share biographies’) in creating the antimafia cooperatives, as well as his own ‘professional development’ in that milieu. Luca, the son of a leading trade unionist, described what he called the ‘cooperativist part of my biography’ in terms of a combination of two interrelated activities: university activism and allegiance to the centre-Left. In an

interview, he also used the term ‘shared biography’ to describe relations with people like Ernesto but also with other current cooperative members and people who (in 2009) were the Falcone’s collaborators and suppliers.

Despite holding a PhD, Luca had not pursued an academic career because of what he called ‘the nepotistic networks in the University of Palermo’. He and his friend Giulio Erice had been overlooked for lectureships, although they were promising academic agronomists. They nevertheless established contacts through research in the Faculty of Agronomy and went on to collaborate with each other after university. Today Erice administers the Tazza farm in Termini Imerese, on which the state had bestowed land sequestered<sup>9</sup> from a man accused of being a member of the mafia. The two enterprises are in collaboration: Falcone provides Tazza with packaging, marketing and commercialisation services.

Luca’s genealogy of political activism in fact includes his own kinship relations with people in politics; his involvement with *esperienza associazionista* and political activism was heavily influenced by his family background. His father was the president of the communication workers trade union (a strong union of the public sector in Sicily) and his brother an MP in the Sicilian Assembly (the Parliament of the autonomous region of Sicily). The lack of kinship ties that supposedly guaranteed and promoted administrators’ meritocracy claims in fact refers only to kinship *local* to Alto Belice: in Palermo, they were themselves entrenched with kinship -and friendship- relations that played a key role in their own lives and careers. Here, I draw on Bourdieu’s problematisation of ‘meritocracy’ and his emphasis on the reproduction of certain fields (such as the academy) taking place through ‘genealogical’ succession, where kinship is also a factor (1988). Administrators were

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<sup>9</sup> In criminal proceedings against a person ‘*for mafia*’ his assets are sequestered when he is formally charged, despite the presumption of innocence. They are then confiscated if the defendant is convicted ‘*for mafia*’, i.e. for any type of criminal offence related to article 416 *bis* of the Criminal Code., if he cannot show they have an innocent origin.

themselves embedded in kinship-informed hubs (not less because, as most were unmarried, they still felt attached to their parents). Their own kinship background informed and reproduced their class positions. Administrators' support of the Consortium's rhetoric refers to kinship relations of other people, people whom they did not see as equals: Alto Belice local workers.

When people joined the cooperative workforce as administrators, they were typically already linked together in 'horizontal' relations through past professional and/or political bonds, which determined future contacts and eventual job recruitment. Mina and Claudia had taken the same Masters degree in Milan; Checco knew Marelio and Gianpiero from Libera and Addiopizzo; Loredana knew Luca from his studies in Agronomy and through Libera: the list goes on, including everyone involved in the administration of the cooperatives. Gianpiero told me that some of the people in the administration were his 'lifelong partners'. Along with the theme of shared biographies, the idea of 'lifelong partners' shows that social networking is understood as a process of building bonds of relatedness. Networking can thus be characterised as a relatedness idiom for the administrators. This in turn provided the lynchpin of recruitment: administrators would be 'brought into a coop' on the basis of their network linkages, their 'shared biographies' with other administrators or the fact that they were 'lifelong partners' in a common political or ideological cause, that is, elements in their past activity, political and other, when they had shared time with others who had already arrived in the position of cooperative administrators.

When administrator informants explained their own links to me, they often condemned the nepotism and corruption in the city (Palermo) and public institutions (eg the universities), which had excluded them from other labour markets, as in the case of Luca and Erice. This throws much light on how administrators distinguished their own

networking practices as ‘virtuous’, and the term ‘virtuous circle’,<sup>10</sup> as they used it to legitimise their own practices. They had crafted the neologism as a word play on the way they used the term ‘vicious circle’ to refer to relations of corruption and patronage, influenced by the mafia. They deemed the ‘virtue’ of their networks to derive from their ‘meritocratic’ formation, part of their commitment to antimafia, seeing themselves as gatekeepers of legality.

When I asked him to elaborate, Ernesto told me that ‘the household’ was a ‘particularistic unit’, while ‘networks’ were the expression of ‘broader interests’: networks, for the informant, implied politicised solidarity while households meant seclusion from society. Administrators thought the responsibilities of cooperative members towards their families were often restrictive on the development of cooperatives, as the obligations and dangers which cooperative membership entailed were difficult to reconcile with maintaining a family. Family and cooperative were mutually exclusive in this respect, especially when their interrelationship implied continuities with broader local relationships, including relations with *mafiosi*. Kinship and friendship, ‘friends of friends’ (*amici degli amici*) and affinity (*comparatico*) had been historically (in the bigger picture) and specifically (in the cases of Akragas and Paradiso) charged with mafia connotations, and administrators therefore deemed them ‘vicious circles’. By contrast, Palermitans presented networking among activist social circles as virtuous. Claudia for example stressed the fact that not only was she not from Alto Belice but indeed, she came from outside Sicily (where she had transferred at 30 years of age). She emphasised to me that she had ‘shared a lot of time, ideas and thoughts’ with Mina, when their paths crossed studying for a Masters degree in Corporate Social Responsibility. The fact that Claudia eventually joined Libera and engaged

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<sup>10</sup> I am adopting the use of this indigenous term both to elucidate and problematise it.

in antimafia associationism ‘brought her closer’ to the Palermitan Mina and enclosed her in the ‘virtuous circle of the antimafia’, as she told me.

The virtuous circles, webs of relationships among equals unmediated by kinship, created a sense of a closed group of relatedness among Palermitan administrators.

#### **4.1.2. Networking as relatedness**

What administrative members, using the idiom of virtuous circles or virtuous networking, identified as meritocratic might sound like just another version of nepotism. Their invocation of ‘meritocracy’, which purports to be neutral with respect to class, is for this specific reason more effectively ideologised, with recruitment through ‘virtuous circles’ of relatedness functioning as administrative teams’ class-related reproduction (Bourdieu 1977). Meritocracy is typically associated with invocation of ‘modernisation’ and ‘development’, as well as with ‘transparency’ and ‘legality’; in that way, the virtuous networking replicated the rhetoric of the Consortium ‘Development and Legality’. In that respect, their relatedness was structured on their middle-class backgrounds, formed on networks based on shared ideals and activism and broadly shared political allegiances, promoting this rhetoric. It is particularly interesting to note that this idea of modernisation, associated to meritocracy and legality, implicitly draws on ideas portraying the mafia as ‘archaic’ and pre-modern; in 2.1, I have discussed how Lupo (2011) challenges this unproductive idea, connected to ahistorical notions of ‘tradition’.

Most of all, the idea of virtue and meritocracy here was premised on a consensus about what it was *not*: the exclusion of kinship relations from the administration groups. In that respect, the antimafia networking was a type of relatedness performed *against* kinship – nepotism, their much emphasized point of differentiation. Administration members exploited their lack of kinship ties locally to legitimise their networking. This is evident in cases of ‘shared biographies’ and ‘lifelong partnerships’ as per Luca, Ernesto and Giulio, as well as participating in common milieus in Palermo.

Based on the above, I argue that the presumed virtue of administrators' networks was presented as an alternative to kinship, informed by ideas of political allegiance, which should be seen as an idiom of 'networking' relatedness. The Consortium and Libera all saw these links as a legitimate basis of recruitment, justified as means of promoting meritocracy. Defined by the *absence* of kinship bonds with the village, the virtuous circles formed very specific 'moral borders' for the cooperatives, aimed at warding off the potentially corrupting influence of nepotism. The administrators' networking formed one side of the relatedness idioms that constituted the cooperatives, the other being *raccomandazioni*.

The division of labour in the cooperatives therefore drew on certain ideas about kinship, a concept often seen as class-informed<sup>11</sup>. The insistence on lack of local kinship links was informed by specific configurations of class (middle class as opposed to workers) and social backgrounds (city as opposed to village) and functioned to exclude local workers from ever occupying positions of power in the cooperatives.<sup>12</sup>

The administrators' virtuous networks were not aware of the local historicity of the antimafia movement, as regarding the fact that local peasant struggles involved the mobilisation of families. In terms of the detachment of work and family, the 'virtuous' recruitment the antimafia cooperatives' administrators advocated is, on the one hand, highly selective in its history of the antimafia movement, ignoring the kinship-based networks that informed mobilisations around the antimafia, as stated in the historical description in Chapter 3 (see for example the discussion in the *Casa del Popolo* in 3.1.1). On the other hand, it ignores the ongoing kinship networks supporting and shaping the experience of the antimafia cooperatives (as shown in the following section). The overview of the movement that administrators embraced was related with the ideological tendency to

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<sup>11</sup> For example, for an analysis of kinship among the middle class in Greece, see Sant Cassia (1992).

<sup>12</sup> I shall explore this legitimisation further along discursive themes in Chapter 7.

present the cooperatives as breaking from local kinship traditions, not taking into account the contribution of families.

This project of modernisation resembles Weberian ‘ideal-type’ concepts of the modern as involving the separation of family and kinship relations from work (2009 [1922]). Weber’s notion of bureaucracy itself proposes an ideal type separation of kinship and office, which seems to reverberate with the ideas the antimafia cooperatives’ administrators had for themselves. The (legal and accounting) separation of the business enterprise from the household was crucial for the emergence of modern Western capitalism, for Weber – a prerequisite for the deliberate planning of rational economic action (1978: 63). Anthropologists have challenged this hypothesis. Yanagisako’s work for instance, is useful because it tackles the myth that ‘advanced’ capitalist enterprise is the *locus classicus* for such separation (she writes about the affluent Northern bourgeoisie of Como). Critiquing Weber, she notes that:

While this separation may have been a significant innovation, Weber’s error was to misconstrue the legal fiction of separation – which was put in place for the purpose of limiting individual and familial financial liability – as a de facto separation of family relations from business relations. In other words, Weber turned a legal fiction of the separation of the family from the firm into a social theory in which the family and the economy in modern capitalist society were cast as distinct institutions. (2002: 21–22)<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, administrators took at face value the Consortium principle for politicised antimafia cooperativism, that family/kinship relations and cooperative membership were mutually exclusive, in a modernism akin to what Yanagisako attributes to the Weberian analytical model. Namely, they embraced the political fiction of total separation from kinship relations as part of their cooperative experience, creating a networked relatedness of their own.

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<sup>13</sup> In the next section, I take up this discussion further.

The Consortium ‘Development and Legality’ picked Palermitans as administrators *because* of their lack of kinship ties to Alto Belice villages. Since Luca took over the presidency in the Falcone cooperative, they have been reproducing the role of the ‘detached’ administrator through networking among commuters to Alto Belice. Their teams’ coherent ‘virtuous circles’ suggested ‘borders’ within which the ideology of legality (including, of course, meritocracy) and development, fundamental aspects of modernism, were contained. This ideology represented a ‘moral universe’ that the administrators thought was in need of protection from the contamination of kinship relations. Their specific common backgrounds (young, educated, middle-class) secured this system of reproducing the administration teams. This was not merely in the abstract: in their everyday practice they detached themselves from the ‘family’ and the household, the sphere of immediate experience for the manual workers’ cooperative recruitment.

In the remainder of this chapter, the data gathered among workers show that, for the majority of people participating in the antimafia cooperatives (the local, manual workers) kinship is not only relevant but indeed constitutive of what it meant to them to participate in antimafia cooperatives.

In the next section therefore, I show how kinship-based relatedness in fact significantly contributed to antimafia cooperativism. I show that local *raccomandazioni* practices equally contribute, as idioms of relatedness, to the making of cooperatives, seen as part of what constitutes antimafia cooperativism. In fact, the cooperative experience blurred local workers’ idioms of what is home and what is work. This conflation of terms tends to confirm that the ‘separation’ of home from work remains a highly ideologised, but historically unachieved, project of modernity (Zelizer 2005). ‘Benign forms’ of capitalism such as social cooperatives have nourished the myth of this separation, despite claims of cooperativists in the name of ‘community participation’. In this element, a basic characteristic of cooperativism, especially in political-inspired forms (Zamagni and



Zamagni 2010: 23–25; but also see 2.2) there are tensions with meritocratic strand of modern economy's agenda. Alongside Yanagisako's (2002) critique of Weber, therefore, Bourdieu's critique of the ideologised concept of 'meritocracy' (1988) is also useful to think through 'networking'.

#### **4.2. 'Raccomandazioni': Antimafia Families among Local Manual Labourers**

My question in this section is how a kinship-based form of relatedness developed among non-administrative workers and how they reconciled the relationship of kinship and work. This relates to my broader question about the bridge between community and work in antimafia cooperatives. It becomes particularly salient given that cooperativism *as* antimafia was strongly ideologised by Libera and the Consortium's suspicion towards kinship, implied in their rhetoric of corruption and patronage, understood as continuous with the mafia tradition of Alto Belice. The state model of antimafia cooperativism was underpinned by the idea that the community's wellbeing lied with the state's intervention, important in displacing and disrupting this problematic tradition. While the ways administration members constructed their recruitment echoed this ideology of an antimafia cooperativism detached from kinship, locals entered the cooperatives through channels of kin or friends' 'recommendations' (*raccomandazioni* or in Sicilian: *raccummannaizziuni*). If '*raccomandazioni*'<sup>14</sup> provided a thread between kinship and work, what does this thread consist of and how does it connect to people's conceptualisations of the values of family

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<sup>14</sup> My decision to use the Italian term rather than English equivalents (literal: 'recommendation' or, more loosely, 'a reference') is not meant to indicate a presumed unbridgeable translation but to demarcate the variety and flexibility of meanings attaching to the term in Alto Belice and in Italy at large (Zinn 2001). *Raccomandazione* implies 'mediation': to recommend someone for a job. There has been debate as to whether *raccomandazioni* are ways to transgress, or reproduce, class stratification (Sylos-Labini 1975). Ginsborg notes their organic role in the Italian political system (2003: 101, 202), stressing social mobility. Palermo has been called 'sponge-city' (*città-spugna*: Cole 1997; Cole 2007), as local middle classes have achieved social mobility through accessing jobs in the public sector via *raccomandazioni*. Chubb notes routinised political party practices 'of 30 *raccomandazioni* per day' in Palermo (1982: 93), which echoes Bayart's (2008) description of African 'opportunity states'. The sociologist and activist Danilo Dolci's accounts have stressed how *raccomandazioni* from the powerful have framed the working lives of the poor since the 1950s (Dolci 1958; 1964; 1968), proposing forms of political mobilisation inspired by Gandhian approaches to tackle these problems (2007).

and cooperative – and indeed antimafia cooperativism? I should also note in advance that, in Alto Belice, ‘household’ and ‘home’ are used interchangeably. The vast majority of my local informants were members of a nuclear family, with whom they shared a home. I discuss household composition in more detail in the next chapter. As Harris underlines, ‘the household denotes an institution whose primary function is co-residence’ (1984: 52). (Chapters 5 and 6 elaborate on this definition of household, showing how household as co-residence is both deeply rooted and reproduced in legislation).

‘Virtuous clientelism’, implying ‘benign’, non-nepotistic networks providing routes to jobs, have been proposed as a way to resolve the ‘Southern [Italian] problem’ (Piattoni 1998; Pipyrou 2008). As recent works emphasise, in the increasingly precarious Italian labour market much still turns around *raccomandazioni*, a practice that remains a constant, albeit updated (Procoli 2004). Zinn views *raccomandazioni* more through a framework of corruption than of patronage, arguing that corruption, as a ‘shared knowledge’ that ‘creates actors’ personhood’ has substituted for patronage as a ‘hegemonic discourse in the current state of play’ in the social sciences (Zinn 2005: 233; Zinn 2003).

#### **4.2.1. Relatedness through *raccomandazioni*: making ‘antimafia families’**

In 2001, Falcone was composed of 15 members and no day workers. The members of this original team, coming from various villages of Alto Belice and from Palermo, had been gathered without knowing each other and without prior experience in cooperatives. Ten of the original members had gradually left the cooperative out of fear, lack of financial support or disagreements with other members. Of the remaining original five, only Luca had a decision-making role by the time of fieldwork (having been the cooperative president since 2004). Continuing relations of friendship, affinity, and kinship supplied the Falcone’s (as well as the other two cooperatives’) manual workforce member-teams, formed among villagers, to substitute the members who had left. Permanent members brought in newcomers, mainly daily, contractual workers, who proved as permanent (and, mostly, as

well-paid) positions as those of the member-workers'.<sup>15</sup> Being recommended became the only mode of recruitment to the cooperatives' manual workforce teams, marking a divergence from the public contests' principles. The kin of members and workers entered the cooperatives 'by default', as Enzo described it, explaining that the practice of hiring seasonal workers was 'as natural as the feelings of being related to someone'. Men were hired to work the plots and women for services such as the *agriturismi*; all these people were related to existing cooperative members.

Pippo introduced Adamo to me as a cousin he had 'mediated for and recommended'. Affinity relationships were also important: elder cooperative members secured jobs for their brothers-in-law (*cognati*) or sons-in-law (*generi*). Adamo presented Donato (the 26-year-old boyfriend of Paolo's daughter), saying, 'His father-in-law mediated for him'. Enzo Riceli was proud to state that his *raccomandazioni* had 'brought many distant relatives into both San Giovanni cooperatives'. When I traced this back to people he had 'recommended', such as Ciacio and Pippo, they confirmed he had mediated for them. In some cases, relationships between the Falcone and Borsellino work pools overlapped: one's son-in-law could be another's brother. This suggests that common kinship pools lay behind the rhetoric of ideological 'solidarity' between the two cooperatives, reinforcing their interrelationship.<sup>16</sup> (See Figure 4.1 below, for a map of *raccomandazioni*). As he had been a member of Falcone since 2002, Enzo's *raccomandazione* for his own sons Ciccio (a Borsellino member-worker) and Lino (a Falcone daily worker) was undisputed.

Often, therefore, wages from two different cooperatives ended up in the same household, as with Enzo's family. People thus associated the cooperative with home, seeing it *as* a home. Boasting that three men of her household worked for two different

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<sup>15</sup> As shown in 5.2, this 'freedom', to cite Pippo, a non cooperative member of the workforce, allowed for extra income, in the form of benefits, when not working.

<sup>16</sup> In fact, the presentation of 'solidarity' among cooperatives was a common idiom used to establish political alliances with institutions, as explored later in the chapter.

cooperatives, Santa concluded, ‘our family, our Riceli home is a coop’, using the term *casa* (home: co-residential household). Her sons, Lino (20) and Ciccio (25), and her husband Enzo (49), saw their household as an ‘antimafia family’; so did Santa herself who, like Rita, bracketed together family and cooperative, ‘one being the other side of the other’. All four members of the Riceli family received some income from the Falcone and Borsellino cooperatives, albeit in differentiated ways. Enzo was one of the only three Falcone member-workers, who received a monthly wage (of 1100 euros); Ciccio received a mean of 600 euros monthly, as being a member-worker of the Borsellino as his permanent contract was based on daily payments; Lino’s pay, as a daily worker, amounted to a mean of 600 euros monthly as well; Santa received seasonal daily pay (mean of 150 euros monthly) (see Figure 5.2). This financial situation solidified their belief that theirs was ‘the very definition of an antimafia family’. Importantly, this belief was not based on a common ‘consumption pool’ in the family, as each managed the major part of their finances independently.

Rita Giuffrè was a 50-year-old woman from Rocca and Santa’s best friend. Paolo, her husband, of the same age and origin, was a permanent worker in the Falcone and recommended his wife for casual jobs with the cooperative. I often worked alongside her and other cooperative members’ wives. She too referred to the ‘cooperative being our home’, prompting other ‘ladies of the coop’ (as they referred to themselves) to tell me about how their households spilled over into the cooperative. Some ‘coop ladies’ used the term ‘antimafia family’ to describe their households, in this way distinguishing their own from other local families. They employed the discourse of ‘antimafia families’ in different ways: on the one hand, to refer to generational overlaps of family members in the workforce of the cooperatives; on the other, to provide meaning to the cooperative

experience itself, and in this way to 'familiarise' their relationships with each other. They were proud to stress that being part of an 'antimafia family' was 'something special'.<sup>17</sup>

During the preparation of Christmas packages of cooperative products, I worked continuously alongside 'the coop ladies'. I observed that Rita's and Maria's use of 'home' idioms to describe 'their' cooperative was often exclusionary, delineating the social boundaries of the cooperative group and setting the terms in which 'foreigners' were allowed into the cooperative by the grace of homely hospitality.<sup>18</sup> Despite her friendly behaviour, Rita often reminded me that I 'had got the job because I was a foreign observer', while she and her friends had it 'because we are the other side of the cooperative; the cooperative relies on us wives'. Many other women made similar associations between their family values and their cooperative experience. Maria, Pippo's wife, likened the 'unity' of a cooperative to that of a family. When Pippo fell out with the Borsellino cooperative, he told me that some of his ex-colleagues were 'conspiring against him'. Maria, who was particularly proud of her husband's involvement in the cooperatives, severely criticised him for his using the term 'conspiracy', saying 'a coop is like a family; conspiracies do not take place in it'.

Therefore, actively pro-family views of members' wives complemented the cooperativist experience of their husbands and, by and large, of their families. Importantly, what Rita called 'the other side of the cooperatives' suggests that antimafia families were constituted as such by absorbing the cooperative into family values, and extending family into the cooperative. Maria saw 'family' as a unifying force: she applied this quality to the cooperative. This overlooked the fact that some members of the household received a regular wage from the cooperative while others, including herself and the other 'coop

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<sup>17</sup> The cooperatives were then symbols of class distinction locally as well as in the case of the Palermitan administrators (Bourdieu 1989).

<sup>18</sup> In parallel, some women also used 'home' to describe Italy in xenophobic tones: Santa thought 'Islamic' immigrants had to convert to the Christian values of 'our home'.

ladies', only received sporadic payments for daily chores.<sup>19</sup> The differences in pay and wage regimes of local men and women reflected divisions of labour and distribution of resources at home. The household divisions of labour, in turn, reflected the cooperative's labour organisation: women did not work the soil and were hence not granted member status in the cooperatives. The positions in the cooperatives' manual workforce were strongly gendered<sup>20</sup>. Rita's analogies between home and cooperatives reflected this gendered division of labour, brought from the home to the workplace and vice versa.<sup>21</sup>

Women often discussed the reproduction of people, families and cooperatives in the same breath. Caterina, considerably younger than her colleagues, had moved to San Giovanni together with Piero, her husband, who was a member of Falcone. They had a six-month old baby, born in the village. Caterina worked for Falcone only occasionally and, because of her pregnancy and the child's rearing, she had not done so for a while. This did not matter since she saw her recruitment to the cooperative and the birth of her baby as all part of 'the same process of bringing up an antimafia family'. In a discussion I had with her, Rita, and Santa, Caterina went to great lengths to portray to us the importance of Falcone for her young family. As she narrated her story: 'the coop is responsible for the whole of my life. I met Piero through the cooperative and my daughter was born within it. We were made a family through the cooperative'. 'No doubt her first word will be *CO-OP*', commented Rita, petting the baby. Rita and Santa commented that their families had

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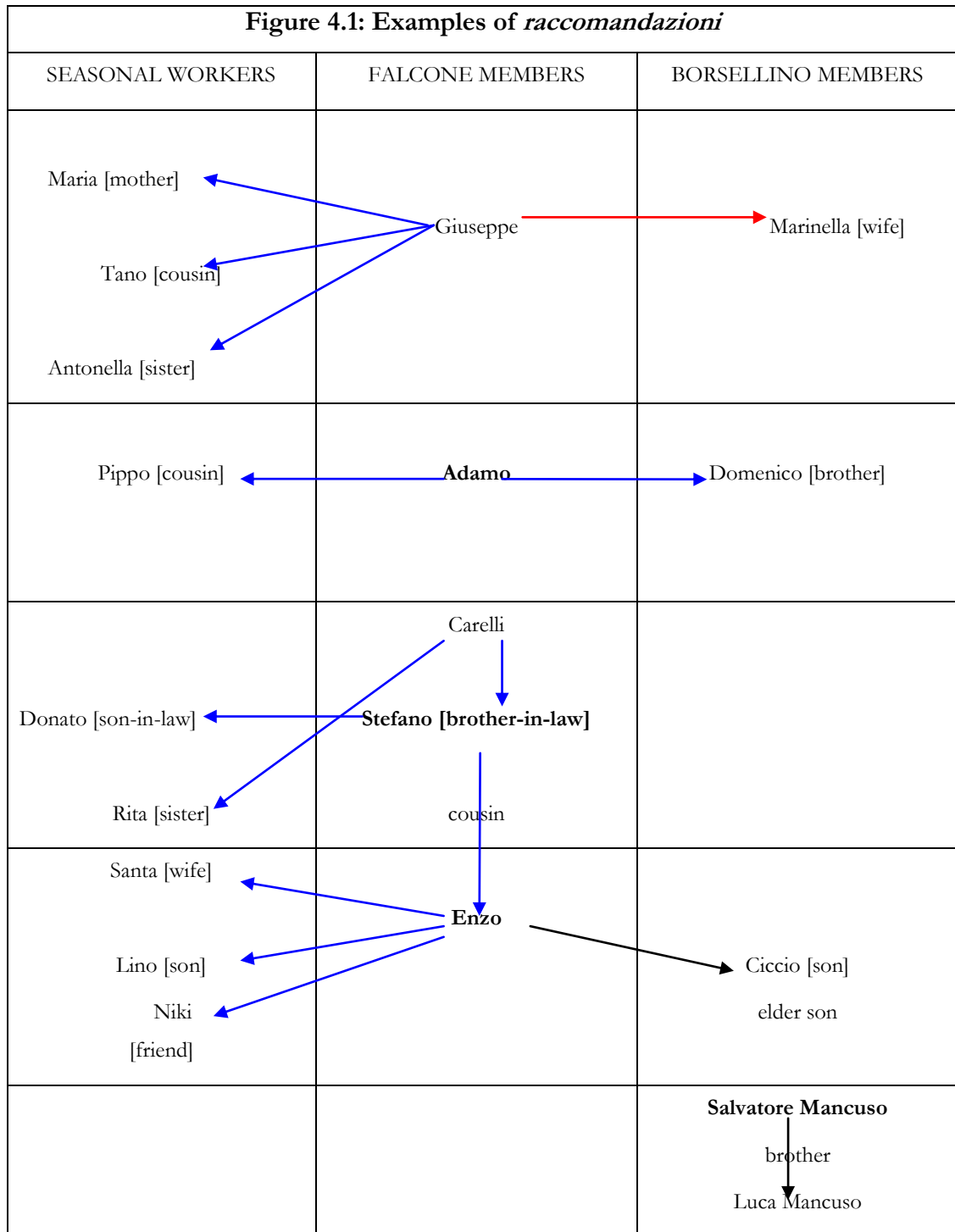
<sup>19</sup> Women's discourse on the co-reproduction of families and cooperatives rested largely on accepting the very low valorisation of their own work. This idea was based on the historical positioning of female labour in Alto Belice: working the fields was an exclusively male job, which women were not allowed to do. As I argue in the following two chapters, this condition was also partly informed by local mafia ethic. Ironically, this gendered work ethic was a point of continuity between mafia and antimafia families, constituting the norm of the local antimafia families and the cooperatives, in which their members worked: some in leading roles with steady income (men) and others in secondary roles with sporadic daily pay (women, who, as mentioned, were never members of the manual workforce teams).

<sup>20</sup> For instance, the term 'manual' itself seems selectively applied in a gendered way: packing Christmas boxes is seemingly not classified as 'manual' but 'services'.

<sup>21</sup> The next chapter will explore 'traditional' gendered divisions of labour as a local 'continuity' reproduced unchanged, despite the 'rupture' cooperatives claimed to inaugurate.

'found the coop on their way, and changed through it, while Caterina's family grew within it'. This illustrates how the cross-fertilisation of family and cooperative sometimes took on naturalising undertones: reproduction of family and cooperative represented in literal reproduction (babies). Caterina affirmed that her young family was an antimafia family *par excellence*.

Apart from changing existing idioms of kinship by mapping family onto cooperative, the *raccomandazioni* acted as vectors of relatedness, giving a new directionality as actions that built and built upon enduring relationships (see Figure 4.1).



Examples of this include the cases of the ‘brotherly’ feelings Adamo felt for Pippo, or Giuseppe, who was employed on daily work contracts, and constantly complained about the indifference of his Borsellino cooperative colleagues in not allocating him more work days, but saw the efforts of Giusy, a Falcone member, as ‘sisterly’, as she used her influence



to do precisely that. *Raccomandazioni* thus informed and reconfigured the meaning of kinship in Alto Belice, creating new linkages. This is one important reason why local workers defended and evoked idioms of kinship-based relatedness, as kinship helped them to guarantee jobs in the cooperatives, despite the cooperatives' rhetoric on meritocracy. In the next section, I discuss the elastic relatedness bonds formed among people after a *raccomandato* entered a cooperative. In the process of constituting antimafia families, merging the nuclear family and close kin with cooperative identity, the manual workforce stretched kinship bonds in order to maximise employment opportunities.

In the next section, which explores the transformations and continuities in the interactions between family/home and cooperative in more depth, I suggest that this was a mutually enriching process that enhanced ideas of relatedness *and* cooperativism and thus shaped the workers' experience of antimafia cooperatives not *against* kinship but as crucially *intertwined and supported* by kinship. The consequences of forming antimafia families at times produced processes of prioritising among people and constructed hierarchies of values.

#### **4.2.2. Changing ideas of kinship through the cooperative experience**

So far we have been examining how decisions in respect to cooperative recruitment became part of their relatedness-making process. But what happened in cases of conflict? Rita Giuffrè had a brother, Carelli, who was hired by Falcone after the 2001 public contest, which constituted the cooperative. Carelli had mediated on Rita's behalf, giving a *raccomandazione* for her husband, Paolo, and also Paolo's cousin, Enzo, bringing them into the cooperative. Carelli was a founding member of Falcone, and his influence in mediating counted. Eventually, however, the very affines he had recommended challenged his own position in the cooperative. Once established in the cooperative, Paolo openly accused Carelli to their co-members of overcharging the cooperative when he bought machinery from Paolo's shop, keeping the difference for his own profit. In a Falcone members'

meeting, Paolo was supported by his cousin Enzo in publicly exposing Carelli and eventually managed to get him fired for his fraudulent behaviour.

Carelli and the cousins thought about the event in quite different relatedness terms. Carelli explained to me, 'I thought that my *raccomandazione* introduced honest family people to the cooperative – but they disappointed me.' Paolo told me that he saw Carelli's fraud against the cooperative as being dishonest to his own affines, his own 'family'. Enzo chose to 'withdraw', as he put it, his affinity connection and ignore his indebtedness to Carelli, choosing to 'think more as a coop member than as a relative', as he explained to me. Finally, Rita resented her husband's and her cousin-in-law's decision, admitting to me and to others that she was distressed she had to pick loyalties.

This incident presented Rita with contradictions between the identification of kinship and work, corresponding to household, her more broadly defined 'family', and coop. She now realised that she had to re-classify people whom she had grouped as members of her family and home. She felt, she explained to me, that the cooperative had ceased to be *both* home *and* family, which had challenged her belief that 'the cooperative is our home, our family' (*la coop è casa nostra, la nostra famiglia*). Now, her brother, 'who was family' (as she said of Carelli) was excluded from the cooperative by actions of her husband, her 'home' (the nuclear family household). Her interwoven categorisation of the wellbeing of family and cooperative had now been challenged. Therefore, she had to choose between brother and husband, as one had to 'come first'. She opted to stay with the cooperative, as she told me 'in order not to contradict my husband, my home' (*casa*, i.e. household). Her household, seen as nuclear family's co-residence, came before brotherly love, when juxtaposed to the cooperative's priorities. Later, she explained to me that she saw her brother as a 'co-member' with her husband and 'the cooperative's and my home's good came first'. The *raccomandazioni* recruitment strategies therefore, revised people's established kinship and friendship relationships, when challenged, because cooperative

members prioritised their own relations with other members over them. Re-classifying practices like Rita's, which rearranged relatedness idioms (family and home) to accommodate someone's position in the cooperatives, were common.

Niki, the manager responsible for the *agriturismo* of Falcone, had originally been a *raccomandato* of Enzo. After a few months on the job, Anna, to whom he was accountable, fired him after a disagreement. Now unemployed, he thought it was obvious that Enzo should recommend him for a *bracciante* position in a cooperative. This expectation was enhanced because he and Enzo were 'brotherly' friends and compatriots, both hailing from the small village of Rocca. Enzo's word counted in the cooperative's recruitment scheme but he had to pick his *raccomandazioni* wisely, as he could not accommodate many people. He preferred to mediate for his 20-year-old son Lino, who was unemployed and needed a job. Enzo and Niki both told me that Lino entering the cooperative made their Miceli home a real 'antimafia family'.

Niki and Enzo were not speaking to each other, at the time of fieldwork. They both translated the cooperative's recruitment in fictitious kinship terms, speaking of 'betrayal'. Niki told me, 'Enzo Riceli was born without siblings but found a brother on the way: myself. And now he has chosen not to have a brother anymore... the whole Riceli family is crap – apart from the mother: a true Santa'.<sup>105</sup> When asked, Enzo admitted they used to be 'brotherly' but commented, 'How am I expected to prioritise anyone over my own family? I now only say hello to this person because my [Catholic] faith dictates me to do so; he otherwise is a stranger to me.' Yanagisako proposes that betrayal can be a force of production in Italy (2002: 114–116). In this case, the *raccomandazione* practice produced betrayal, *raccomandazione* being an idiom partly informed by the moral need to prioritise the home/family and the cooperative over people who fall outside cooperatives' recruitment

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<sup>105</sup> Santa means female 'saint' in Italian.

and consequently cease to see each other as relatives. Prioritising one person over another (Lino over Niki) was a not untypical moment, part of the experience of shaping new sets of relatedness in the context of cooperatives. In the process of Enzo's *raccomandazioni*, the fictive kinship idiom collapsed and he prioritised his nuclear family. In a break from work in the vineyards, I talked family matters with Lino, the younger Riceli. He was particularly proud that the Ricelis were the epitome of an antimafia family: every member was somehow involved in the cooperatives in one position or another. Lino, like everyone else in the cooperatives' manual workforce, used the terms 'family' and 'home' interchangeably. Moreover, he clarified that his family now had 'this parallel meeting place outside the home', meaning that every day he met his father Enzo and brother Ciccio in the fields, or in the *Centopassi* winery, where Santa also came in the course of her work. Enzo joined in the discussion, agreeing with his son. However, Fano, another cooperative colleague, interrupted us to say angrily that someone from the administration team had told him that 'family matters were sometimes less urgent than the cooperative'. Lino immediately chipped in with 'and you didn't spit in his face?'. His father and other co-workers nodded in agreement.<sup>106</sup> For Lino and others, frictions did arise in the constitution of antimafia families. Ultimately – if forced to choose – the priority was clear: family over cooperative. Thus, as the example of Lino illustrates, the overarching – and genuinely embraced – presumption and lived practice is that cooperative membership means that 'we are an antimafia family'. And yet, this equation family and cooperative may break down, in which case, as Lino made clear, family trumped cooperative.

The broader question is how this discussion feeds back into the debate about the role of kinship in antimafia cooperatives. Interlocutors from Alto Belice (manual workforce

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<sup>106</sup> This exchange should be read in the light of the previous discussion of administrators, whose political alliances created alternative ties of relatedness among them. Here the workers' reaction indicatively reveals the nature – and strength – of many local people's response to the networking relatedness of the Palermitan administrators.

members and their wives) drew on the idioms of family and kinship to talk about other social relations and groups – antimafia cooperatives. This practice proposed a cooperativism that was inclusive of kinship and that implicitly or, sometimes, explicitly rejected the administrators’ image of antimafia cooperativism, which corresponded to the official state model of the Consortium. This model is inspired by the modernist ideal of escaping the grip of local relations by separating work from family. Both administrative and manual workforce teams made use of relatedness for skill-oriented recruitment, and hence to reproduce themselves in the cooperatives *as teams*. However, the workers’ recruitment model changed local relations through cooperativism, through this process enriching both the realms of kinship and of work. At the same time, this model reproduced existing ideas both of skill and kinship, and also how they corresponded. This approach is more in tune with the historical experience of the antimafia movement and cooperativism, as antimafia struggle has been articulated, in the past, through kinship relationships as well (see, e.g., 3.1.1). Moreover, it confirms that cooperativism is a ‘modular’ notion (Anderson 2006), which means different things to different people and is always contextual and dynamic to the specificities of the historical and geographical contexts it develops in.

For these reasons, I argue that people of the local workforce teams renew – revitalise and, at the same time, re-work – ideas of kinship as a form of cooperative relatedness. Rather than promoting a modernist separation of work and family (with its corresponding ‘meritocratic’ networking relatedness), their practices proposed mediations between work and kinship, or cooperative and ‘home’, in ways that incorporated the rhetoric of collective labour relations (Ashwin 1999). Their relatedness through the cooperative embraced a dynamic idea of kinship in which the boundaries of ‘family’ could be renegotiated. This resonates with the work of anthropologists interested in the interactions between kinship and production processes (Yanagisako 2002; Goddard 1996; Glover 2010) or indeed the tensions between family values and market (Zelizer 1994), who

argued that the boundaries between home and work are, by and large, blurry. However, in antimafia cooperatives, when there is clear conflict, boundaries are momentarily de-blurred and family trumps cooperative.

Ethnographies of work and labour in Italy have rigorously explored the co-articulation of rural work and family (Assmuth 1997; Pratt 1994), although accessing jobs via family links is, of course, not limited to cooperatives or to agrarian Italy. Ethnographic evidence suggests that in industrial settings, where there is stability and continuity of employment, generational, but also horizontal (e.g. through siblings), transmission of work through kin is an important mechanism for the recruitment of young workers (Blim 1990; Mollona 2005a). Some more insights come from anthropological work in historical contexts, illustrating the interpenetration of family and industrial life; Hareven (1993), for example, stresses that changes in one affect the forms of the other (Hareven 2000). Thompson (1967) argues that in early industrial capitalism this process has caused 'disruptions' in familial relations. Kinship networks provided the basis for migration from rural areas abroad (for Sicily: Schneider 1990) or to centres of industrial work, while 'flexible familism' contributed to the 'expansion of class' (Kalb 1997: 91). Indeed 'familialism' (Piore and Sabel 1986) proved to be an insufficient way to analyse how boundaries between home and workplace blur, as it rests on the assumption that there is a fundamental gap between home and workplace, and therefore already implies what is under scrutiny (Morris 1992). This approach makes the intermingling of home and workplace appear to be a 'cultural' particularity of places like Sicily, an anomaly of a canon of modernity in which home and work are – by definition, in other words by theoretical fiat – kept separate. However, as indicated above, ethnographic work on the relationship between families and enterprises emphasises that 'advanced' capitalist milieux, such as Lombardy in Northern Italy, have long genealogies of association between kinship and industry (Yanagisako 2002; Ghezzi 2007; Bonomi 2008). Keith Hart also convincingly

points out that we conveniently call juxtapositions of family and business ‘corruption’, although they happen practically everywhere (2005).

The policy of antimafia cooperatives, led by the image that mafia was associated with family, took an ‘anti-kinship’ stance so far as recruitment was concerned. As this related to administrators, this meant a ‘meritocracy’ agenda (whose problems have been discussed above); for workers, it conflicted with the dynamic interactions of home and work, of kinship and collective labour initiatives. For cooperative workers, the conflation between home and cooperative was part of what it meant to them to participate in antimafia cooperativism. Nor was kinship an inflexible modality; rather, it could facilitate and ‘host’ change. Specifically, the manual workforce members embraced changes in work *through* continuity in kinship and not *against* it. The workers’ practice actually renovated the relationship between home and work. This could be compared to Bloch’s (1989) take on the ability of ritual to invest practices with new meanings serving a novel order. Although here the form is not rituals but the established idiom of *raccomandazione*, Bloch’s framework helps see how the relationship of change and continuity can be manifested through a ‘traditional’ practice retained despite ‘change’ in its ideological connotations (1992). In fact, the *raccomandazione*, as significant in the antimafia cooperatives as in informal work relations before people were employed in the cooperative framework, has helped create antimafia families.

In the remainder of the chapter, I discuss ethnographically what constituted patronage for cooperative workers. I frame this discussion by asking what happened when the different notions of relatedness used by the teams in the two-tiered organisation of the cooperatives overlapped and clashed: specifically, when administrators used *raccomandazioni*, an idiom linked to kinship, in order to hire people with whom they maintained political alliances, for the manual workforce team. I explore what role the notions of patronage and horizontality had in this debate. Since the idiom of *raccomandazioni* does not recognise gaps

between home and work while the idiom of networking aims for what their agents claim as ‘meritocracy’, some interesting conflicts arose, throwing light on both these spheres.

### **4.3. Horizontalities: Relations between the Teams and Ideas of Patronage**

#### **4.3.1. Clashing idioms: disputes over *raccomandazioni* and networks**

Not all *raccomandazioni* were morally acceptable to the cooperative workers. Gossip about what people called ‘political *raccomandazioni*’ within a cooperative was often bitter. In fact, what counted as the ideal in one idiom, i.e. *raccomandazioni*, was precisely what was condemned in the other, i.e. patronage, as shown below. Manual workers criticised *raccomandazioni* from a ‘political source’, which were improper and to be excluded in this idiom, strictly limited to familial relations. As Enzo put it, ‘It is understandable to make a *raccomandazione* for family or friends but political stuff does not make sense’. Notably, he and other older members of the Falcone cooperative commented sarcastically on how Fano had come to be employed in ‘their’ cooperative. Fano, a 45-year-old from Curriuni, did not come from a peasant background; indeed he described himself as ‘a gentleman’. For 17 years he had been the proprietor of an ice cream store in the centre of Curriuni but had gone bankrupt. Members of the Falcone cooperative unanimously believed that, as an active supporter of the Left, Fano’s appointment must have been ‘through a political *raccomandazione*’. When Fano drove me to the vineyards in his newly purchased Nissan, his colleagues often mockingly pointed to the car, saying that ‘the coop money can do miracles for political affiliates’.

However, there were some who suggested that ‘we should draw a veil over the issue of Fano’s presence in the coop’. They felt embarrassed on his behalf because, lacking any kin connections to the manual workforce, he had no way of justifying his presence in the team. Posed with teasing questions such as ‘and how exactly have you ended up here?’, Fano had no answer. Giuseppe, a Falcone worker, told me that ‘Fano was parachuted into



the cooperative from the world of politics'. For a *raccomandazione* to be proper, ethical and acceptable, Giuseppe explained, it had to come from a relative, rather than from the 'shadowy' world of politicians and trade unionists. The underlying idea, as Enzo suggested, was that 'if it is not done through kinship but through politicking, it is unethical'.

Fano admitted to me that, in fact, he had got the job through 'a political *raccomandazione*' – but challenged me to prove that 'my London University' did not work in 'similar patronage-oriented ways'. Surely, he suggested, my own 'anthropologist job' was 'a gift, a *raccomandazione* by some Englishman patron'. As we worked side by side in the vineyards, he often complained that members of the cooperative expressing right-wing ideas should be expelled and that his own ethics were much more 'compatible with the coop'. For instance, he sometimes publicly confronted Adamo on what he called Adamo's 'reactionary' ideas on religion and immigration. The response of other members was that this showed that he had been recruited 'due to those [leftist] ideas he shares with our president', bypassing what for them was the only proper basis, namely kinship.

It is important to identify the circumstances in which recruitment practices could become problematic, or negatively defined, and how people portrayed them in terms of immorality, corruption and 'patronage', especially given the charged local 'tradition' of immoral conduct, associated with kinship, through mafia families, according to the rhetoric of the Consortium and Libera. For both the administrators and the manual workers in antimafia cooperatives, recruitment was strongly inflected in moral terms. However, the two systems, and idioms, of recruitment were normally insulated from each other. As shown above, network-based recruitment of administrators took place independently of the *raccomandazioni*-based hiring of the manual workforce people. The two-tiered organisation of the cooperatives reinforced the differentiation between these moral universes. Within a specific team, therefore, horizontal relationships among team members

were harmonious. Vertical relations between the two teams' recruitment practices often entailed moral conflicts and became an occasion for moral criticism.

A key point of conflict was that politicians and trade unionists often arranged *raccomandazioni* unrelated to the manual workers' kinship relations. The mayor of Curriuni for instance, told me he felt a 'need to guarantee the smooth functioning of our cooperatives'. Politicians and trade unionists saw the cooperatives as the continuation of Curriuni's antimafia political struggles, such as the Fasci and the 1940s land occupations and cooperative movement (note, however, that the antimafia movement was always articulated within/through households and families). Developing sympathies to the cooperatives' administrators, as they saw them as sharing similar political views, leftist politicians and unionists were keen to put in place a system of politically motivated favours, promoting the hiring of left-wing locals by the cooperatives. The main agent in this activity was the leftwing CGIL trade union, and specifically its ex-communist functionary, Dino Paternostro, author of books on the history of the antimafia movement (eg Paternostro 1994). The municipality backed this effort: Pippo Cipro, Curriuni's first Consortium mayor, was an ex-communist himself, sympathetic to the CGIL and to Arci (*Associazione Ricreativa e Culturale Italiana* (Recreative and Cultural Association of Italy), the association that oversaw and influenced the Lavoro e Altro cooperative, when the cooperative established in 2000. Cipro suggested many political *raccomandazioni*. To this day people hired that way, face the sarcasm of some co-members on how they were recruited.

The Lavoro e Altro cooperative, which had opted to identify with Arci, also found itself in the spotlight for other reasons. Some peasant informants from Curriuni thought that Arci was an instrument of 'the communists' and thus that its members were nostalgic about the era of 'Eastern European dictatorships'. Once, as I shared a meal with friends of the Tomara brothers, they jokingly advised me to 'stick around and feast with the

comrades'. The political persuasion of the members of Arci, sometimes ridiculed,<sup>107</sup> was associated with constant patronage-like support for the Lavoro e Altro cooperative by left-wing sources. In the context of Curriuni, a stronghold of agrarian mobilisation in the past, people read this militancy as equivalent to an identification with the CGIL union (see Chapter 3). The politics of the Left oscillated, in this mountain town, between the two poles of the Arci and the CGIL. The municipality promoted this interaction, especially during the early 2000s, and this inheritance resonated in peasants' stories of 'favours' that the mayor had promoted. The suspicion of 'political *raccomandazioni*' and their characterisation as 'immoral patronage' should not be considered as a dissociation of locals from the activist history of the peasant antimafia movement, of which they were proud. In fact, as suggested earlier in the thesis, they considered the cooperatives to be a form of continuation of that tradition. Rather, I argue that their suspicions implied that they privileged kinship over politics, as a moral basis for recruitment to the cooperatives.

People suggested the existence of links among Curriuni's CGIL, the ex-mayor and the president of the cooperative, all members of what Pino called 'the lefty networks'. Some local antimafia families often complained about the cooperative administration being 'too left-wing'. Pino Anemo's family members felt they were an 'antimafia family' by conviction and tradition, but argued that Pino, a militant for the local right-wing administration, 'could not climb the coop hierarchy because of his bravery to be vocal about his political affiliations'. In fact, Fano ridiculed Pino as 'a half-mafioso', because he had campaigned for the UDC party.<sup>108</sup> Similarly, workers of the Borsellino cooperative, such as signor Mento or Niki, suggested that I should investigate 'how the Marcuso

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<sup>107</sup> ARCI is often paraphrased in the context of Alto Belice as *Associazione Rifondazione Comunista Italiana* (Communist Refoundation Association of Italy), referring to *Rifondazione Comunista*, the last successful communist party in the country.

<sup>108</sup> The acronym stands for *Unione del Centro* (Union of the Centre) but in the joking local jargon it is paraphrased to *Unione dei Carcerati* or *Unione dei Carciofi* (Union of the incarcerated or of the artichokes, a metaphor for *mafiosi*), to indicate the centre-right wing party's mafia allegations. In Alto Belice, these liaisons were highly pronounced.

brothers got in [to the coop] and brought others with them, through their *politica* in Curriuni'. The Borsellino cooperative in particular, composed of people who were constantly criticising each other in private, often seemed to me like an ensemble of contradictory channels of *raccomandazioni*, with those deriving from familial links widely approved of as legitimate, unlike the 'political' ones. During pauses at work in the vineyards, workers often ridiculed the public contests of 2001 and 2004 through which Falcone and Borsellino were constituted. 'The public contests were a joke, and therefore people just got in through their politics or kin, whatever was handier', Enzo informed me.

Thus recruitment arrangements for the manual workforce, when done outside the familial domain, were a particularly acute source of conflict. What triggered conflict was not, as one might imagine, manual workers' sense that they had no say in the management of resources or were excluded from decision-making in what was purported to be the cooperatives' industrial democracy (the typical idea of cooperative horizontality, as discussed in 2.1). Rather, what they objected to was the appropriation of the established *raccomandazioni* practice by the administrators and their political allies outside the cooperatives, as the access to jobs through kinship was the reason for conflict between teams. This underlines the constitutive aspect of kinship in antimafia cooperativism.

The appropriation of *raccomandazioni* was seen as the intrusion of an 'alien' idiom into what was considered to be a separate sphere of 'relatedness' that belonged to the workers, of a sense of belonging that is linked to what is 'our own' and to solidarity (*sensu* Edwards and Strathern 2000). In the above narrative, people evoked 'patronage' as a (shared) term of condemnation in order to reject as 'immoral' a type of vertical relation between the teams of the cooperatives in which the administrators' team imposed its recruitment idioms on the manual workforce. So, antimafia cooperatives were shaped by the efforts of these two differently regulated spheres of labour reproduction, normally kept separate from each other. However, when there were attempts to mingle kinship and

politics, or one entered the other's field by utilising its idioms (*raccomandazioni* across political affiliations, as opposed to kinship bonds) or, even more, when cooperativist regulations imposed certain priorities on the management of assets over families (as per the case of Akragas and Tempio, above), conflicts arose, out of class antagonism, as is seen most forcefully below.

I argue below that 'patronage', a term charged within anthropological debate, needs to be revisited,<sup>109</sup> the antimafia cooperatives provide a solid backdrop to measure its precise meaning in context. Specifically, for local people, only political parties and politicians linked to the administrators' networks can be 'patrons'. A *raccomandazione* 'proper', on the other hand, involved only people related to each other and this does not count as patronage. Indeed, as explored earlier, the *raccomandazioni* reinforced people's sense of relatedness. Therefore, members of the manual workforce considered the appropriation of the relatedness-based idiom of *raccomandazione* by the networked administrators unethical, because they thought the administrators dissociated it from the experience of linking family to work in the fields, understood to be the established and moral pattern for the manual workforce team. The workers of the antimafia cooperatives thus defined patronage in terms of mingling the workplace with politics, not with kinship<sup>110</sup>.

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<sup>109</sup> This could also apply, to an extent, to clientelism, often associated to patronage (as per Chubb 1982), but not to nepotism, so intrinsically linked to kinship.

<sup>110</sup> Interestingly, of course, patronage and mafia have been linked in ethnographic discussions to both politics and kinship, which my findings contradict (Pardo 1996; Cole 1997; but see Blok 2001, who acknowledges 'networking' in particular). Moreover, anthropologists have debated whether patronage obscures class divisions among semi-autonomous peasants who do not own all means of production (Li Causi 1975; 1981; Littlewood 1980), Li Causi arguing that class positionalities allowed patronage to thrive in Sicily, through mafia. My discussion takes class into account, but examines work organisations (cooperatives) where different people work together, and not autonomously.

My data shows how the vulnerability of manual workers leads to their moral critique of certain non-kinship based *raccomandazioni*, glossing them as patronage.<sup>111</sup> In the case of Alto Belice, intra-class relations (horizontal relations among equals) are used to construct different spheres of horizontality within the cooperatives, which I have termed spheres of relatedness<sup>112</sup> in order to approach the different idioms and values of each group that, as the discussion on patronage revealed, were mutually incompatible but equally informed the cooperatives in their two – usually segregated – tiers.

#### **4.3.2. Two spheres of relatedness, two spheres of cooperative horizontality**

To summarise: in the context of the Alto Belice cooperatives, patronage and its connotations of immorality are not attached to kinship but in fact developed in a locality (Alto Belice) where administrators did not have local kinship links. Different forms of relatedness have different associated idioms. The appropriation of the *raccomandazione* practice by the Palermitan, leftwing middle-class administrators caused conflict within the cooperatives. Workers criticised those among them who had been hired through ‘patronage’ instead of through ‘*raccomandazioni*’; they said they were ‘parachuted into our team by the administrators’. These ‘political’ links were called ‘false *raccomandazioni*’ and, unlike familial relations, this kind of recruitment was branded as unethical patronage.

The broader conclusion is that, for cooperative workers (the term including daily workers and member-workers), relations between equals, ideologically closer to the horizontal work relations in cooperativism, were imagined and deployed through idioms and links of kinship, while administrators’ primary orientation to horizontal relations was their sense of belonging to meritocratic political networks. However, when vertical

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<sup>111</sup> Whether class consciousness should be taken into account in analysing patronage has been the subject of extensive debate among anthropologists in the context of the Indian proletarianised peasantry. In India, Breman has argued that bonded labour at least provides an important ‘subsistence guarantee’ for peasants (1993; 2003); Brass has attacked this view, arguing that patronage relations obfuscate class struggle, which, in his view, is crucial in tackling the exploitation of bonded labour relations (1999: 226–32).

<sup>112</sup> The term ‘spheres of relatedness’ although undertheorised generally, is not offered here as a breakthrough.

relations between unequals (the administrative and local workforce teams) were negotiated through politics, the result was disturbance of the equilibrium. When there was attempt to mingle the idioms of relatedness *between* the teams, ‘patronage’ emerged as the site of conflictual discourse. Horizontality – or, more precisely, horizontalities – were separately practised by each team. I am arguing that a different *sphere of relatedness* corresponded to *each work group*, the administrators and the manual workers. *Within* each sphere, which coincided with each team in the cooperatives’ division of labour, there was horizontality – but not *between* them.<sup>113</sup>

Bohannan and Bohannan’s analysis of the Tiv’s ‘multicentric economy’ proposed the classic idea of different spheres of exchange, associated with different values (subsistence, prestige, marriage) denoting different spheres of circulation for diverse goods and services (1959: 492). This is an interesting analogy, which inspires my argument on spheres of relatedness. Bohannan and Bohannan’s (1962) idea of multiple ‘spheres of transactions’, where different kinds of goods circulate according to the emotional connotations and values of each sphere takes the argument further. The authors’ point resembles the Polanyian argument that different currencies speak to different values (Polanyi 1957) highlights an interesting idea, which can be applied to the existence of different moralities, by and large corresponding to the different social backgrounds and current relationships (including class and kinship) of the two teams within the cooperatives.

In adapting these ideas here, I bring together the concept of spheres of relatedness with the existence of separate moral positions, to examine how different relatedness idioms are used (in the context of recruitment to employment in cooperatives) in ways that highlight the nuances of ‘moral economy’. Specifically, I suggest that the two groups support different moralities and indeed different ideas of moral economy, which can be

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<sup>113</sup> Interestingly, the idea of the virtuous circle of the administrators’ networking alludes to a sphere itself.

applied horizontally *within* each group but not vertically *between* groups. Therefore, the cooperatives were composed of different horizontalities, specifically *because* the state model of antimafia cooperativism was so explicitly suspicious of kinship, promoting political alliances and networking instead. The ideological undermining of kinship via the rhetoric of meritocracy reinforced the division of labour in antimafia cooperatives. Workers defended the *raccomandazione* practice as a channel that linked work to home (i.e. cooperative to kinship). Linking the practice exclusively to kinship-based relatedness, they resisted the appropriation of *raccomandazioni* by the administrators, who were in more established positions, glossing it as immoral ‘patronage’.

I have already alluded to the Bourdieuan notions of class distinction (1989) and class reproduction, relevant to the cooperatives’ administrators (1988). For each of the teams, their antimafia cooperativist experience was beneficial in horizontal class terms, as it provided people with the possibility to distinguish themselves among equals (accordingly, other families in the village, and friends in Palermo). The conflict in inter-group relationships *between* teams of the cooperatives confirms this. Despite claims to general horizontality (by implication, across all teams), antimafia cooperativism was structured in two-tiers, a strict division of labour that reflected and reproduced class backgrounds.

Among antimafia cooperatives’ manual workforce members, the determinant factor for calling a recruitment practice ‘patronage’ is a move not from kinship-to-jobs (the idiom of *raccomandazione*, totally legitimate among workers) but from politics-to-jobs, sidelining kinship.<sup>114</sup> This finding runs counter to broader debates on patronage in anthropology. The classical patronage literature states that kinship and friendship relations determine allocation of resources (Boissevain 1965). Authors stress the unequal dyadic relationships

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<sup>114</sup> This could be seen as further appropriation, by administrators, of control over the position of workers in the cooperative – added to the lack of industrial democracy.



among people nevertheless related to each other, eventually linked to politics through patronage (Mitchell 2001). The violence involved in some patronage cases is a channel of political power that bridges the kin-group (and particularly the clan-like male brotherhood) to politics and ‘great men’ (Gilsenan 1996). Finally, the findings of certain anthropologists in Southern Italy, who rigidly associate patronage with kinship, however broadly defined, are also challenged by the reality of antimafia cooperatives (Chubb 1982; Pardo 2004).

## **Conclusion**

I have argued that the cooperatives’ two-tiered organisation implies that their reproduction is twofold; the relatedness idioms of that reproduction are not interchangeable between (class-informed) teams, which correspond to different spheres of relatedness and different class horizontalities. Both their idioms contribute to the making of the cooperative and both are seemingly about the same thing – equality/horizontality. There is even some seeming overlap in kinship ‘talk’. Yet these idioms are in fact not only different but lead to mutual unintelligibility. Relating these ethnographically based observations to the current state of play in the literature have sparked from this discussion. I here propose some concluding thoughts.

Firstly, in existing analyses, *raccomandazioni* are typically registered under the classic patronage definition of ‘unequal dyadic relationships’ (Gellner and Waterbury 1977). They form ‘a system’ guaranteeing jobs (Assmuth 1997: 160) in an ‘atmosphere of clientelism’, reproducing mafia power (Schneider and Schneider 2003: 105), or appear as political patronage (legitimate, however, on the ground), through exchanging votes with promises of work (Chubb 1982: 93–96), the reason for ‘Italian crony capitalism’ (Ginsborg 2003b: 68). Often, they do not link to prioritisations of kin, as ‘the resource spheres of kinship and friendship are defined entrepreneurially’ (Pardo 1996: 94–95; 2004). In my discussion, instead, *raccomandazioni* form a moral backdrop of kin-to-kin relations; from this perspective it is only when they are linked to politics that ‘immoral patronage’ arises.

Secondly, therefore, I have debated the term patronage, often used to analyse practices of familial favouritism and clientelism (for Italy: Pardo 1996; Cole 1997; Assmuth 1997). I have shown how, in Alto Belice, this questions the Consortium's meritocratic rhetoric by drawing the line in a different place: kinship networking is immoral when connected to political alliance and not to family per se. Patronage is thus linked to political alliances ('networking') as opposed to personalistic ties (*raccomandazioni*).

In fact, the latter proves to be a more dynamic and flexible category than the former. This is my third point. Networking links people but this linking leaves their relations intact. Instead, *raccomandazioni*, as an idiom of cooperatives' reproduction, have lasting effects on families' own reproduction, reshaping the scope of kinship (coop as family) or renegotiating familial groupings (antimafia families). In Alto Belice, antimafia families were legitimised to perform *raccomandazioni* and *raccomandazioni* formed antimafia families. The sphere of the home often interlocks with economic practices (Zelizer 1995; 2005). A 'processual approach to kinship' (Carsten 2000: 16) can highlight precisely the elasticity of new kinship meanings that such interactions elicit. This speaks against a sociological tradition in which 'familism' has dominated much of the literature on Italy, which in turn promotes civic trust as a replacement for familial loyalty as a premise of cooperation (Gambetta 1996; Gunnarson 2008). Self-proclaimed 'feminist' sociologists have even suggested the 'return of amoral familism' in Sicily (Dino 1996; Principato and Dino 1997). State agents also employ ideas about 'the mafia mentality 'inside' the [Southern Italian] family' (Jamieson 2000: 156–57). I showed, rather, in the tradition of feminist authors, (Morris, Harris, Hareven, Yanagisako, Zelizer and Goddard), that the continuities between home and workplace mutually constitute both institutions and extend their meanings, reinforcing cooperative work.

The main argument of this chapter is therefore cooperativism's entrenchment with families; cooperativism develops, in the case of workers, *because* of this entrenchment and

not in the face of it. The ‘incompatibility’ of cooperativism and of personalised, family-based networks, is therefore dubious, as shown elsewhere (Ashwin 1999). Cooperativism can draw from collectivism and political projects while simultaneously being informed by (different spheres of) relatedness. This is the way workers experienced cooperatives, which consequentially formed their experience of antimafia cooperativism, although it developed without a specific rhetoric, like the dominant model of the administrators. I used Bourdieu’s idea of middle-class reproduction (1988) applying it to ‘virtual networks’ in antimafia cooperatives and showed how their ‘networking’ constitutes a sphere of relatedness, problematising meritocracy, as part of a class-informed modern paradigm of separating home from work (Yanagisako 2002; Zelizer 2005; cf. Latour 1993). ‘Family’ is not an ahistoric, static category, despite the idea that ‘families’ in Sicily often reproduce mafia. Feminist sociology has identified a rising ‘moral familism’ in the antimafia movement (Santino 2007: 104), in women resisting mafia family ethics (Impastato et al 2003; Puglisi 2005).

*Within* each team, shared idioms among equals (networking and virtuous circles, and kinship-based *raccomandazioni*) construct horizontal relations among equals. Between teams, dissimilar idioms produce conflict. Attempts for cooperative horizontality to cross over the strict division of labour in the cooperatives lead to disjunctures (over what counts as ‘patronage’). I have argued that different spheres of relatedness constitute the teams of the cooperatives. These work in two different, detached horizontalities, but cannot mingle vertically, to produce an antimafia cooperativism that is generally horizontal. These idioms corresponded to the two-tiered organisation of the cooperatives, reinforcing horizontalities *within* each team and engendering an overall cooperativist horizontality, due to the incompatibility between different spheres of relatedness.

# Chapter 5

## Wages as Change, Informalities as Continuity: Cooperative Work and Local Livelihoods

### Introduction

In this chapter, I seek to answer the question of what waged employment in the cooperatives implied for the livelihoods of those Alto Belice families whose men<sup>1</sup> worked for the cooperatives, as member-workers or daily workers, focusing mainly on the manual workforce team.<sup>2</sup> I ask what changes took place in the relation between formal and informal sources of income once local people began to be officially employed in the cooperatives. Wages from cooperatives, together with informal wages for seasonal labour from fellow peasants, were the main sources of income for households, alongside unemployment benefits and farm earnings. Where Chapter 4 discussed recruitment for employment by the cooperatives, I shall focus here on people's means of livelihood *outside* the framework of cooperative jobs. The administrators of the cooperatives promoted an idea of antimafia cooperativism as the imposition of a legally bound regularisation of labour (what they called 'standardisation'). Work in the cooperatives was presented as legal, remunerative, safe and horizontal. However, the livelihoods of people in Alto Belice were more complex, comprising informal means of making a living and a series of relationships within and among households, and vis-à-vis the state. I show why this is the case, and how it was constructed, elucidating how people's livelihoods changed and co-articulated with antimafia cooperativism, in response to their integration into waged employment. The core

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<sup>1</sup> As noted in the previous chapter, the cooperatives employed only men for manual agricultural work.

<sup>2</sup> Conversely, in Chapter 7, I focus more on the administrators' team. However, my particular narrative emphases are mutually referential. Therefore, in order to shift the ethnographic emphasis from the one group to the other, I start from the idea that my ethnographic discussion of the groups is relational. Both groups are always present in my ethnographic narrative, even if the focus is on one in particular.

theme is the idea that the centre of antimafia cooperativism was *employment*; I both explain the meanings and ramifications of that policy and assess its adequacy. As cooperative remuneration was not sufficient, locals continued seeking other means of livelihood. This unsettled the horizontality of the cooperatives, as workers<sup>3</sup>, unlike administrators, engaged in informal activities outside the cooperative framework, to complement their family income.

Ethnographically, I concentrate on the cooperatives' manual labour teams, to explore the complexity of local people's livelihoods, problematising the idea that being hired by a cooperative implied a total radical shift in local ways of making a living. I juxtapose the standardised, albeit seasonal and not very remunerative, employment regime offered to local men by the cooperatives, to two local practices popular among families of male cooperative workers: registering family land in the name of women and exchanging 'informal' work among men. The gendered division of tasks within the household and the mafia's influence in the continuation of these two activities reveal a range of interesting implications. These activities existed prior to the establishment of the cooperatives and survived the changes in local people's work patterns developed within antimafia cooperativism. In this way, I explore the situated continuities that the deployment of antimafia cooperativism was arranged around, discussing locals' labour activities that escaped the framework of political economy. The discussion shows that people's livelihoods were constituted of a variety of different sources that ranged beyond the cooperatives and did not cease because of the relative standardisation of labour relations that the cooperatives sought to impose on people's livelihoods.

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<sup>3</sup> Henceforth to include worker-members and daily workers, unless stated.

Gavin Smith, echoing Marx,<sup>4</sup> notes how some people's (branded as 'ghostly figures') livelihood activities fall outside the domain of political economy (1989: 112). I inquire into such invisible, strongly gendered and often illicit activities, in Alto Belice, and explore what the integration of local men within the 'standardised' political economy of the cooperatives' workforce implied in practice. In this context, I underline the importance of gendered configurations of labour and land tenure in Alto Belice. Both practices were widely established before the cooperatives were established but local men's integration into the wage employment system of the cooperatives did result in some modifications of these arrangements. Exploring the changing meanings of these practices after they became a complementary source of income alongside men's registered wage employment, I elucidate the relationship between formal and informal income opportunities in the making of the cooperative workers' livelihoods, problematising the standardisation argument of the administrators. As elucidated in 2.2, the cooperatives' 'horizontal' political economy was concretised through a practice of organised wage employment. Therefore, the stake of antimafia cooperativism is indeed vested in employment – a formal, regularised and legalised contractual<sup>5</sup> relation binding members together (and to obligations) – a standardised model of labour relations that, however, proves unable to sustain family livelihood needs or contain the community practices of local workers.

In the vast literature on livelihoods, Robert Chambers (1993) is a useful source. He notes the importance of families' gendered strategies to negotiate land ownership in order to guarantee their 'livelihood security' (Chambers 2000: 121). Gavin Smith's (1989) approach includes not only 'materially' oriented activities and relationships but social and political ones too: people engage in a range of relationships and 'resistance' activities (for

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<sup>4</sup> The young Marx of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844; Smith quotes from Bottomore 1964; latest edition: Marx 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Of course, the employer in these contracts (of members, and daily workers) was 'the cooperative', as represented by the Administration Council and the Assembly.

example joining a social movement) as part of their livelihood strategies. This is a useful way to think of livelihoods within and alongside cooperativism- as well as paying attention to workers' local codes. I borrow the term from Schneider and Schneider (1976), as I discuss below. Chapter 4 focused on the local code entailed in kinship-based *raccomandazioni*; here it is ideas of gendered land tenure and 'community'-based work ('mutual aid'). I then see the experience of participating in cooperatives as a kind of work that, in local understandings, is inclusive of different relationships, which bridge the home and workplace, and could even include affiliations to mafia-inspired practices, glossed as 'community' or 'ways of life'. This approach reviews cooperativism as a modular notion, as discussed historically (Chapter 3), locating aspects of it beyond the domain of political economy.

### **5.1. The Administrators' 'Standardisation' and the Manual Workers' Experience of Work in the Fields**

Gianpiero, the president of Libera Palermo and a member of the Borsellino cooperative, spoke to me at length in an interview about the changes that wage employment in the cooperatives had brought about locally. He suggested that Libera and the administrators of Borsellino:

had managed to convince the *braccianti* using only the wallet [*col portafoglio solo*]: we ask them how much the *mafioso* pays them, they tell us, 'he pays 30 euro a day' [*iddu mi paga 30 euro a jurna*].... OK we tell them, last year the daily pay according to the law, the daily contract for agriculture was 51.62 euros. ... So, come to us! ... This is how much they get, legally. It's the norm [*È la normalità*]. And so, imagine Theo, for the Borsellino coop there were 300 applications for *braccianti* positions! People realised that their interests were with the legality, the normality.

[Lengthy pause.]

But ... I tell you, we can't pay them more money, say 60 euros a day. Because it's fair not to; we don't want to reward anyone. [*Perchè è giusto- non vogliamo premiare*

*nessuno*]. In any case, the mafia boss [*il boss*]<sup>6</sup> would not pay the local *bracciante* more than 60 euros ever. That's the way forward. We have to speak to people with and through the wallet [*Così si fanno i passi avanti. E si deve parlare col portafoglio alla gente*].

'The wallet' implied not only good daily pay but also legally guaranteed protection, such as employment contributions towards pensions.

Early on in fieldwork, I realised that the cooperative administrators were importing ideas about waged work that were new to Alto Belice. Cooperative and Libera representatives emphasized the need to 'standardise work relations', that is, regulation. 'The wallet' thus meant not only solid remuneration and other benefits but was also part of the process they called 'standardisation' or 'normalisation' of labour in the form of *employment*. They presented the cooperatives as bringing this standardisation – a protective legal regime, never before deployed in Alto Belice. Most cooperative administrators were convinced that the process of formally valuing agricultural waged work and promoting labour rights would be accompanied by ideological change. Luca told me, that 'once a labour regime is standardised, it would drag peasants away from mafia sympathies. ... Their ideas will follow their conditions of living'.<sup>7</sup> This normalisation/standardisation involved a net pay of 51.62 euros per day, plus national insurance contributions, as well as taxes, accumulated towards pensions. However, Gianpiero, in another interview, admitted that 'the wallet' was not always enough to 'shift ideas':

As regards the peasants of San Giovanni, those under contract labour from the cooperatives, our member-workers [*i dipendenti delle cooperative*], I can tell you frankly that they are not antimafia [*loro non sono antimafia*] ... They haven't been able to listen to the antimafia. We have managed to convince them only using the wallet [*col portafoglio solo*], but there is still work to do ... although we have managed to consolidate strong networking among us and in the cooperatives.

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<sup>6</sup> In Italy, the emic term to describe a leader of a mafia clan is the English word 'boss'.

<sup>7</sup> Luca's account here seems like a slightly 'vulgar', simplified Marxism or, indeed, the discourse of modernisation as changing mindsets through imposed restructuring of economic activity, as explored in post-colonial contexts in relation to moral economies (e.g. Taussig 2010 [1980]).



The *braccianti* of the cooperatives that Gianpiero referred to were the people in the manual workforce who were either members of the cooperatives or daily labourers; alongside their cooperative employment they were also smallholders. They earned wages from the cooperatives by working in the confiscated land plots and also worked on their own land tracts (*pezzi di terra*), mostly vineyards.<sup>8</sup> Most of them, when I asked, acknowledged that the pay from the cooperatives was ‘pretty good’– but always added ‘but not enough’. A part of their income came from selling their own grapes to the local wineries, such as the *Sancipiriddu*, in which they were also producer-members. As independent producers, they called themselves *contadini* (‘peasants’), a term that encompassed all landowners, regardless of the production scale; (as noted in 3.2.1 their mean landholding was a modest 3.5 ha).

Loredana, a 35-year-old female administrator for the Borsellino cooperative, was sceptical about the extent to which the standardisation of labour ‘could work’, querying whether local workers took it seriously. She complained to me, mocking the Sicilian dialect of cooperative workers:

... when local people applied to join the cooperatives, they expected *the* stable job,<sup>9</sup>  
... integration into a system of a stable monthly wage [*u trabbagghiu fissu...a sistemazione*]... I have discussed with all members about their views of what the pay and the overall remuneration might be like. People think that by entering the coop they have found a steady stipend. This condition is an expected Sicilian disease.

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<sup>8</sup> The co-articulation of waged labour and land cultivation meant that informants were at the same time both workers and independent peasant producers. There is a vast literature on people, whose livelihoods combine peasant and worker statuses, including ethnographies of Italy (eg Pratt 1994). This experience has been identified as a ‘mixed’ one according to the Portici school of sociology; in Emilia, the combination of farmer and labourer identities was incorporated within broader development plans (Mingione 1994). In Sicily, it has been linked with household subsistence but as not contributing to broader growth (Centorrino et al. 1999). Instead, this ‘mixed’ mode has remained in place as a way of sustaining the livelihood of local households, precisely due to the 1953 land reform, which fragmented land in small tracts, a situation reproduced in inheritance patterns.

<sup>9</sup> Ethnographies of Western Sicily stress how ‘the stable job’ was an idiom of the non-productive middle classes of the city, rather than a characteristic term of the rural workforce (Cole 1997; Chubb 1989).

Silvio, the president of the cooperative, shared this view on his colleagues, and indeed thought their attitude to demand a steady wage was counterproductive.<sup>10</sup> The production team members regarded these two young and educated administrators as ignorant in agricultural matters despite the fact that they were the cooperative's agronomists and the only members with a degree. They thought that the administrators' insistence on 'promoting the standardisation' was naïve if they could not back it up with a full monthly wage for all members, administrators and workers alike. The explanation administrators gave for the fact that they – unlike everyone in the manual cooperative workforce bar 3 member-workers of Falcone – received a monthly wage was that agrarian work was seasonal, unlike their work, which needed constant presence in the office throughout the year.

Unlike Gianpiero, Silvio and Loredana and other cooperative administrators and representatives, who were often disliked by local workers for such views, I was frequently invited to homes of *sangiovernari* to spend time and discuss their experience of wage work with the cooperatives. I soon found that what people mostly wanted to talk about, perhaps heated by the flow of their homemade wine at the dinner table, was their experiences of working their own plots, rather than their paid work for the cooperatives. I spent large parts of my fieldwork working alongside them, in the cooperatives' vineyards, joining teams of 5 to 15 men every other morning throughout December, April, August and September (months of intense agricultural work). In that context, I witnessed their sense of pride in working on ex-mafia confiscated land.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> As noted (see Figure 1.1), of the manual workforce's members, only 4 out of 10 in Falcone, and none in the other cooperatives, had a monthly wage; although all of them had permanent contracts, they were paid on a daily basis.

<sup>11</sup> I refer to both workers and member-workers as 'workers' in this chapter, unless otherwise stated.



**Photo 14:** Workers in the vineyards, applying wire over the vines.



**Photo 15:** Falcone workers about to take a cigarette break in the vineyards.

The cooperatives modelled the recruitment strategies for their manual workforce teams' on the gendered distribution of labour common in Alto Belice. The absence of women on every plot of the cooperative land that I visited made an impression on me. Their absence was constitutive of the manual workers' work identity. Manliness was fundamental to the definition of their worker subjectivities and a form of class identification. Men experienced working the soil of the cooperatives' plots<sup>12</sup> as an expression of masculinity. Their work discourse often evoked stamina and courage, – here seen as especially masculine characteristics – which men thought were needed not only to undertake the labour process but also the 'antimafia burden'. Working on the confiscated land was thus 'even more masculine', Enzo noted. This echoes ideas on the articulation of antimafia activity in terms of bravery (as discussed historically in Chapter 3). These understandings formed bonds of camaraderie among workers and established their practice of calling each other '*compare*' (godparent, but also comrade<sup>13</sup>). They also underlined the distance between the administration and manual workforce teams, marking the

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<sup>12</sup> Referring to a plot as Falcone's or Borsellino's and so on is obviously not literally correct, as the confiscated plots belong to the state and are leased for free (*accomodato d'uso*) to the cooperatives. However, everyone I met used terms that implied ownership when referring to 'our cooperative's plots'.

<sup>13</sup> For Alto Belice, it is very important to emphasize that the contemporary use of these *comparatico* idioms among people of the antimafia cooperatives is completely separated from the historically (mafia-) charged godparenthood fictive kinship idiom (Arlacchi 1986). More relevant are analogies with *compadrazgo* in Latin America to elucidate how idioms of work camaraderie develop as positively perceived kinship language (Nash 1979).

cooperatives' division of labour. Often, men working in the vineyards recited sexist jokes to contrast themselves to the 'kids in the office' or to celebrate the manual labourer's manhood, compared to the ambiguous manliness of the 'pen pusher'.

Through masculinity the *braccianti* underlined the moral superiority of their work experiences, which they brought into their new identities as wage workers in the cooperative ambience. Phrases like 'one poor man's cock is better than those of one hundred rich men' celebrated the presumed sexual capacities of 'the peasant', and the somatic abilities of manual labour, while associations between their own work making the land fertile were also rife. At the same time, they often ridiculed the exclusively male work of the countryside, using self-mockery ('in the village you get pussy, in the plot arse'). Promiscuity and sexual potency, men asserted, were 'naturally' stimulated by work in the open air, unlike the 'closed' environment of the administrative team's office, which they considered unhealthy. Despite the overt manliness, they emphasised their fidelity and family-oriented ethics, which 'anchored' them, as they said, to their homes. As Pippo Pitre put it, 'In the village, we refrain from these jokes: we are faithful to our wives and honour their presence in our households'.<sup>14</sup> Men's experience of their employment in the cooperatives was masculinised as a daring political activity but also fed into their family-oriented livelihoods.

Male workers hardly ever talked about their wives' contributions to their household income. They claimed that women laboured towards the well-being of the home by making sure that food was served after a long day in the fields. Nevertheless, they indicated that

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<sup>14</sup> Because of the gendered nature of my fieldwork, the fact that I am a man meant that I was not exposed to some of the gendered contradictions in households (Morris 1992), about which, researchers should be cautious. I have not been able to draw much data for analogies with women's get-togethers. The ethnographic discussion here does contribute further work on the significance of men's proverbs (Brandes 1980) in understanding husband-wife relationships. There are, indeed, many points to be made by studying these symbols, gestures and sayings among men in public spaces (such as the workplace) to yield an idea of relations in the private space between husbands and wives (for Sicily: Blok 2000). Herzfeld underlines the performance of masculinity in Crete (Herzfeld 1985). I engage further with this literature in Chapter 7, where I discuss local indirect communication.

what they called the position of ‘the wife’ (*a mulber*, meaning ‘the woman’) was fundamental for the constitution of the household economy. They also alluded to ‘other income sources’ coming from ‘the position of the wife’, which helped with their households’ financial needs.

I was intrigued to find that Pippo and his cooperative colleagues, second- or third-generation plot owners, had become mainly wage earners. The factors at play in this process stemmed from the coexistence of farm earnings with wage income. This was itself the consequence of the recent transformation that the cooperatives had brought about, as they hired peasants under standardised contractual employment terms. I wondered what were these ‘other income sources’ that men kept mentioning? Were they linked to the standardisation process that cooperatives brought to waged work, introduced into local discourse by the administrators? The clue to answering these questions seemed to lie with the status of land tenure for the cooperative workers’ households. In the following section, I scrutinise women’s ‘absence’ from the fields, how the mafia has contributed to that condition, and what registering land titles in the names of wives implied for family livelihoods. I will pursue these issues through two case studies of local families differently linked to the cooperatives: in the first, the man is a daily worker; in the second, there are two male member-workers (one with a permanent wage), one male daily worker and a rarely employed woman.

## **5.2. Registration of Land to Wives**

### **5.2.1. The Pitrè and the Riceli families: work, plots, benefits**

I became increasingly aware that households had other sources of income alongside daily wages from the cooperatives and their earnings from selling the grapes from their vineyards to the local wineries. Many informants mentioned unemployment benefits and wages from other sources of agricultural work. From discussions, therefore, I identified a fourfold income for cooperative workers’ families: cooperative wages; the trading of their

grapes to wineries; waged work; and, only for *daily* workers, but not for member-workers unemployment benefits. At the beginning, I thought it odd that people were cooperative workers *and* landowners and yet eligible to claim benefits, as workers told me they did. In Italy, being registered as unemployed while owning and running a firm, such as a farm, however small, is prohibited by law. Therefore, I needed to examine how the standardisation of work had brought with it the opportunity for receiving state benefits, especially since all of my informants were also peasant entrepreneurs.

As noted, domestic arrangements in Alto Belice were usually organised around a nuclear family with land ownership as the central feature of familial economic life. In the majority of the households I studied (22 out of 25), I visited the homes of cooperative workers or people affiliated to the cooperatives, who were all members of nuclear-family based households. Generally, commensality and co-residence of a family were the primary factors denoting the limits of the households, which were consequently conceptually identical to the limits of the family. I came across no virilocal or uxorilocal cases in the 25 households for which I have data. Inter-generational co-residence was also surprisingly rare, occurring in only 3 local families, where the cooperative member was not married.

Most households therefore were composed of a husband (the effective land proprietor, and waged worker), a wife (housewife and sometimes in irregular waged employment, and also the nominal land owner, as explained below) and children, whether of school age or slightly older (studying, working in waged employment or helping with the family plots). Despite women's absence from agricultural work and their restriction to the domestic sphere, the households' 'family firms' (*aziende*) were registered to wives, who were routinely registered as *capoaziende*, i.e. owners of the family's land. Conversely, husbands, who were the actual managers of the plots, were called *capofamiglie* (family heads), a title descriptive of the domestic sphere rather than that of economic enterprise.

Meillassoux (1981) argues that the status of the head of the household is constituted outside the domestic sphere. As Harris notes, in most cases, male power is vested by the state: male heads are made answerable to the state, as the household as an institution becomes visible to the state through the identification of one person who represents it; she calls this process ‘a partial devolution of power to adult males’ (Harris 1984: 59). In Alto Belice, this devolution has been forged in terms of wives, as those who are accountable for the household’s land ownership, but this does not reflect a matriarchal organisation of the household.

Pippo and Maria Pitrè, a couple from San Giovanni, were the first to explain to me the details of the gap between legal title and the actual practice of land tenure, as I spent a considerable amount of time in their home. This ethnographic data confirms Pratt’s findings from Italy, where he notes: ‘those who do have joint property rights in land do not necessarily produce together’ (1994: 104).<sup>15</sup> Of course, the term *property rights*, in Sicily, as I shall show, does not reflect the actual ownership of the plots and is only nominal. My findings are also in line with Pratt’s on how agrarian transformations (in his case in Tuscan agriculture) led to wage labour eventually becoming the main source of income for rural families (1994: 66).

Pippo was a 58-year-old *sangiovannaro*, who used to be a member of the Borsellino cooperative but had resigned a few months before I had met him (due to conflicts with the administration over the fact that, as member-worker, he did not receive a monthly wage). He eventually decided to go back to work as a daily worker for the Falcone, as he needed the money. I rented the apartment he owned at the centre of the village. The family lived in a farm house, 2 kms outside the village, as they preferred the tranquillity of that area. Maria,

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<sup>15</sup> Admittedly, a different history of land tenure (sharecropping as opposed to latifundia), as well as a more rigorously attentive exploration of a large household sample by Pratt (1994) in Tuscany, are key factors accounting for this marked differentiation. Having acknowledged this, I should stress once more that my research focused only on families of antimafia cooperative members.

his wife, 16 years his junior, did not work outside the home; they had a 17-year-old daughter, Elena.

As I had become good friends with Pippo, the Pitre family often invited me for dinner. Regularly, after a day in the vineyards of the cooperatives, Pippo asked me to join him in his house for a warm dish of pasta with vegetables from his garden, cooked by Maria. As we sat gathered around the table, he boasted that we were enjoying his ‘own wine’, comparing it to the cooperative’s: ‘the cooperative wine is too commercial’, while the wine from his vineyard was ‘authentic and pure’. His vineyard was located at Chiana: he was proud that he cultivated the red Nero D’Avola variety at 670m above sea level, as it was very difficult to grow red grapes at such a high altitude. Pippo was also proud of the fact that he matured the wine in his cellar (in fact, the garage). Like other cooperative daily workers, he thought home-made wine was qualitatively superior to the wine made at the cooperatives’ winery. For him, the only advantage of the cooperative production of bottled wine was that they produced it on a larger scale; scale; quality-wise, ‘his own wine’ was superior.

Elena always left dinner early to go study in her room. She was soon to take entrance exams for university. The fact that she had chosen Parma (an Emilian city) for her studies reflected her father’s involvement in the cooperative, ideologically inspired by Emilian ‘red cooperativism’.<sup>16</sup> However, when talking about how the family would finance Elena’s studies, Pippo barely mentioned his cooperative pay. Rather, the plan depended on the year’s harvest turnover, he talked more about harvest expenses, including wages paid to friends who would help, than his own wage from Falcone.

Maria was a return migrant to the village. Her parents had left San Giovanni at a young age as landless peasants, before the agrarian reform of 1953. They had immigrated to

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<sup>16</sup> The consumer coop representatives from Emilia who often visited San Giovanni influenced antimafia cooperative members, describing the wealth of Emilia.



Uruguay, where Maria was born and raised. She went to live permanently in Sicily in 1985, hardly knowing anyone and having no family assets to her name. When she married Pippo, her dowry did not include any land at all. She married into the Pitrès, a relatively poor family, whose assets included a house and four ha of vineyard that Pippo had inherited from his father, who had acquired it through the agrarian reform of 1953. Nevertheless, she appeared on the title deeds as the owner of the Pitrè family's plots. 'I had nothing waiting for me here, when I emigrated,' she clarified; 'It was my husband who sort of gave his plot to me ... we agreed for him to transfer them to be registered in my name, and here I am, owning four ha today'. The transfer had taken place, as with most peasant families, as soon as the couple married, in 1986. The scheme was widely practised in the area and the reason for it, I was told, was tax avoidance. Registering land to wives minimised the couple's joint tax liability as the assets were shared between husband and wife.<sup>17</sup> The practice of female landownership, discussed right below, rather than 'traditional', as called locally, dated back to when tax avoidance started, which coincided with the mid 1950s for most local families, as with the Pitrès.

On several different occasions, I asked Pippo the same question I asked both manual daily workers and member-workers: what were the specific sources of his family's income, given that Maria was not in waged employment? Like most other *daily* workers, Pippo worked for the Falcone cooperative for about 100 days a year, earning an annual net income of about 5.200 euros. The wage he received from the cooperative for those workdays provided the basic subsistence for the family. The Pitrès budgeted around that 'family wage', as they called it. Unlike the steady wage from the cooperative, farming involved risk and unpredictability and therefore could not be reliably calculated. Pippo, like others, calculated that the cooperative wage provided for roughly 40% of their annual

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<sup>17</sup> This an interesting 'diverging devolution' (Goody 1976: 21), implying inter-spouse trust. As with the Pitrès, I have tracked a sample of 22 married families who followed this tactic and have not heard of any couple who had separated, so regrettably I have no data to explore what happens in case of divorce.

income, while farm earnings yielded around another 20%. He was disappointed about the fact that, with the dire prices of the grape varieties he cultivated (Cattaratto, Viognier and Nero D'Avola), he had to sell a kilogram of grapes for 0.20 euros (see Figure 5.1) The rest came from 'other sources', apparently related to his wife's position in the household economy, on the one hand, and to his relations with other peasants, on the other. This is what he initially told me, as we worked together at the cooperative's vineyards. Working at his friends' vineyards, exchanging labour and cash with them, provided another 20% of his earnings, as I explore in the latter part of the chapter. Therefore, the family's livelihood was planned according to a multi-source income, sources that seemed connected to each other.

**Figure 5.1: Sancipiriddu grape prices, in eurocents**

<b>PRICES OF HARVEST 2009 SANCIPIRIDDU WINERY</b>	
MERLOT	26,50
SYRAH	25,00
NERO D'AVOLA	24,00
CABERNET SAUVIGNON	26,50
SANGIOVESE	21,50
NERELLO MASCALESE	21,00
PERRICONE	21,50
CHARDONNAY	30,00
VIOGNER	30,00
CATARRATTO	20,00
INZOLIA	20,00
TREBBIANO	18,00
GRECANICO E DAMASCHINO	20,00
<i>Source: Sancipiriddu cantina cooperativa, 2008</i>	
Figures: eurocents per kilogram	

At our third dinner, he finally disclosed that the rest of the family's income (the final 20%) stemmed from the fact that the plots were registered to Maria. What he, like other men, had mentioned to me while working in the vineyards about 'other sources' now made sense: it was state welfare provision. This came in the form of unemployment benefits for Pippo, who legally appeared as unemployed for roughly 250 days a year. The fact that his waged work was now officially registered with the state made him eligible for benefits for the days of the year he did not work. In fact, a good 20% of the Pitrè household's income came from this source. However, if Pippo had the farm registered to him, he would not have been eligible for these benefits, as he would have appeared to the state as a professional farmer. As the land had been registered to Maria since 1986, when Pippo started to engage in registered waged employment for the cooperatives in 2000, he immediately became officially employed and therefore entitled to security, pension and welfare benefits. When asked about this, he commented that 'here in Alto Belice, everything is a trick' (*é tutto una truffa ccà*).

The incorporation of local male peasants into *daily* waged employment for the cooperatives thus consolidated the pre-existing informal practice of 'traditional' female landownership, grafting on further positive attributes. What was already a widely deployed practice by peasant households, apparently for tax purposes, had now become an unexpected source of additional income. Locals thought that state policies imposed structural constraints on their households (taxation) and therefore felt justified in using these strategies, pointing as well to the lack of welfare provision for housewives. In Alto Belice, as in the rest of Italy, women working as housewives were not recognised as workers in the state's employment registers. Hence, they could not claim unemployment

benefits, although, according to state regulations they were not in employment<sup>18</sup>; in fact, they were eligible to claim only the lowest, ‘pauper’, ‘social pension’ of 160 euros a month, once they reached 60 years of age. For this reason, the Pitrès planned ahead, taking advantage of the couple’s 16 year age difference, to improve Maria’s pension. With Pippo due to retire in a few years, they planned to arrange a reverse transfer of the land’s ownership, from Maria to Pippo; he would then head the *azienda* himself and ‘hire’ her as an employee, until she became entitled to her pension. This way, she would be able to put together some years of registered employment, over this time, paying the minimal state contributions to be eligible for a pension, once she had ‘retired’. She did not actually intend to work on the farm in her 50s; in fact, like most married women in San Giovanni, she had hardly visited the plots she ‘owned’.

Similarly to the Pitrès, other antimafia families with this household livelihood pattern also followed the strategy of nominal female land ownership. The Riceli family, whom I discussed in the previous chapter hailed from the village of Rocca. All three of the male members of the family were employed by the cooperative: Enzo and Ciccio were member-workers on permanent employment (Enzo with a monthly wage); Lino was a daily worker. The father, Enzo, after years of cooperative employment had brought his sons into the cooperative through his *raccomandazioni*. Santa, Enzo’s wife, did only petty jobs for the coop on a daily contract basis and never worked in the fields. ‘Field labour is not for us women –everyone knows this in Alto Belice,’ she clarified when I asked her.

Santa was proud, however, to be the *capoazienda* of her ‘antimafia family’. The Ricelis owned a couple of vineyards, which they had bought when they returned from Switzerland, where they had lived for 12 years, between 1985 and 1997. Enzo had initiated

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<sup>18</sup> The fact that they were not ‘actively seeking waged work’ (understood as regular employment) is not relevant, in this context; their husbands (and in some cases, like the Ricelis, explored below, their sons) when not seeking regular waged employment either, while receiving unemployment benefits.

the idea of moving to Switzerland because, he said, hard as he had tried, he could not find work in construction jobs in Rocca; Santa had agreed and, when they were 24, two years after they married, they had emigrated in 1985. The 1980s saw a sudden burst of construction of public works in Alto Belice, where a significant amount of Cosa Nostra's heroin profits was invested, for money laundering purposes<sup>19</sup> (Sterling 1991; Stille 1996). Such works included the Palermo–Sciaccia highway, just outside San Giovanni. Enzo told me that workers were paid cash-in-hand by *mafiosi* middlemen, precisely to facilitate the *mafiosi*'s money laundering. Most of the workers on such schemes were peasants: grape prices were dropping in the mid 1980s and construction work was more profitable than cultivating vines. Enzo himself had worked on the Rocca reservoir construction project but became disillusioned with how much the project was controlled by the mafia and so he had sold the 2 ha vineyard that he had inherited from his father and gone to Zurich with Santa. Their son Ciccio was born there shortly after and Lino three years later. When they returned to Sicily in 1997 they immediately bought 4 ha of good vineyard close to Rocca; the official purchase being registered in Santa's name, for the usual tax reasons as described above.

In the case of the Pitrès, the transfer of land from husband to wife took place at the time of their marriage in 1986. For the Ricelis, the family's investment in land, after their return migration, was directly registered to the wife, Santa, in 1997. She was therefore, from 1997, a *capoazienda* in a household with three men who joined the wage employment of the cooperatives, as a conscious family plan, beginning with Enzo in 2000, the sons following in 2005. Although Santa appeared as the landowner, Enzo and Santa clarified when sharing their life stories with me, the money for the land purchase came from Enzo's waged work in Switzerland and it was his idea to buy land in Rocca in the first place. Santa's

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<sup>19</sup> San Giovanni *mafiosi*, especially Brusca, were the key figures in international heroin trafficking at the time.

landownership ‘produced’ benefits, for this ‘antimafia family’, *only* for the *daily* worker Lino, as Ciccio, and Enzo, who were cooperative member-workers, (indeed Enzo, one of the very few member-workers on permanent wage), were never registered unemployed.

<b>Figure 5.2: Two families’ income (numbers are approximate)</b>		
	<b>Pitrès</b>	<b>Ricelis</b>
<b>Family members</b>	Pippo:working in coop Maria and Elena:not working	Enzo: member-worker <i>on permanent wage</i> Lino: member-worker on <i>daily wage</i> Ciccio: <i>daily worker</i> working in coop Santa: working occasionally
<b>Wages from coops</b>	5200 euros annually [shared among members]	Enzo: 13200 euros Lino: 7200 euros Ciccio: 7200 euros Santa: 1800 euros [each member kept most of his own earnings]
<b>Privately owned land: Earnings from grapes [agrarian profit only]</b>	3.5 ha 2500 euros annually [shared among members]	4 Ha 2700 euros annually [shared among members]
<b>Wages from informal work</b>	2300 euros annually	Enzo: 2000 euros Lino: 1000 euros Ciccio: 1000 euros
<b>State benefits</b>	Pippo: 2200 euros annually	Lino: 2000 euros Ciccio: 2000 euros Enzo: no benefits, as he was in permanent, continuous employment, on a monthly wage Santa: no benefits, as annual workdays to make her eligible did not suffice

### **5.2.2. Wives as landowners in antimafia families: state, mafia, and local codes**

The two case studies (the Pitrè and the Riceli households) are characteristic of the broad pattern among antimafia families in Alto Belice: in all 25 households for which I have data, where at least one member worked for the cooperatives, the married woman had

all the landed property in her name, as the nominal *capoazienda*.<sup>20</sup> This includes land brought to households of antimafia families through the wife's marriage dowry (as was the case with Tano, a Falcone cooperative worker, and his Curriuni family) but also households where the wife brought no property to her new household.

Registering land to wives was established practice for both antimafia families *and* mafia-affiliated families. These strategies<sup>21</sup> are therefore continuities of practice in which local cultural codes are sustained under antimafia cooperativism, despite the cooperativist model proposed by administrators, one solidified in a standardised political economy of waged employment.

As already noted, in Alto Belice, the strongly gendered division of (manual) labour meant that women never worked in the fields: their labour was largely (although not exclusively) domestic, away from the public eye. Married women themselves embraced this exclusion: Santa and Maria felt that joining men in farm work would be 'absurd'. Rita Giuffrè also emphasised to me that, although her brother Carelli, her husband Paolo and her future son-in-law Donato worked in the cooperative's vineyards, she was very happy that her paid work for minor tasks within the cooperative kept her away from the fields.

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<sup>20</sup> It was not possible to use the Italian Land Cadaster (the national land registry) to establish the exact picture of land tenure in the village overall: one can refer to the Cadaster for details about *any one specific plot* but not all the plots of an area. When I did so, to establish the ownership history of some plots confiscated from *mafiosi* and bestowed on the cooperatives, in 15 out of 19 cases the plots of the *mafiosi* were registered to women: their wives or a straw-woman.

<sup>21</sup> I am aware that, in talking about household livelihood strategies, there is a danger of assuming a unified 'husband-and-wife' stance that overlooks possible tensions or ambivalent feelings (Morris 1992). As already mentioned, I lack data about what happens in terms of land ownership if a couple splits. From my sample of the 25 closely studied households of antimafia families, no such issue arose and I did not observe behaviours that would point in that direction on the part of women, regarding their roles or remuneration – although my own gendered positionality must be acknowledged. However, the fact that women were (as shown in the previous chapter) strong advocates of the interconnection of cooperatives and family environments and the constitution of antimafia families makes a strong case for their commitment to their husbands' work and their sense of partaking in a joint enterprise. In terms of waged labour valorisation, with all the limitations that involves, women accessed a degree of economic fulfilment, on the basis of their husbands' *raccomandazioni*, in performing 'petty labour' tasks in the cooperatives, especially in the *agriturismi*, where, again, they worked in what resembled a homely setting. For these different reasons, I stand behind the idea that tension between husbands and wives in terms of their economic cooperation in making ends meet was modest.

The cooperatives, also, as mentioned earlier, employed women for work in the *agriturismi* (as well as, of course, in the administrative teams).

There is an interesting issue here about the mafia role in shaping this gendered division of labour. Local people pointed to mafia protocol<sup>22</sup> specific to Alto Belice as a significant factor: the cultural influence of the monosexual mafia had led to the historical phenomenon of women being excluded from working in the fields. The example of Antonia Brusca, analysed in the following chapter, may be taken as indicative of San Giovanni mafia norms: when her three male children were arrested and charged with being Cosa Nostra members, her stance on those of the family's vineyards registered in her name accorded with the model of women's absence from farm work: she simply abandoned the fields. Further evidence in support of this argument can be found through a local comparison. Workers such as Pippo or Enzo often contrasted the male monopoly on agricultural work in their Alto Belice villages with the neighbouring town of Alcamo, where women did work in the vineyards. Visiting the fertile Alcamo valley, just outside Alto Belice, I myself witnessed women working as field hands alongside their male family members. Importantly, in Alcamo, informants suggested that there had historically been different mafia configurations. Evidence from the local press confirmed these oral informal communications: seemingly women did have leading roles in Alcamo mafia. As soon as local male clan leaders were arrested, they were replaced by their wives, who thus moved from occupying roles in the home to fulfilling roles in the local mafia: 'from family to clan',<sup>23</sup> as the local press noted ("S" 15: 2009)<sup>24</sup>. This, I propose, suggests that there is a

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<sup>22</sup> It would not be appropriate to attempt a conclusive answer as to whether this mafia ethic was a local village practice adopted by mafia or a mafia practice imported into the village. This would be to misunderstand the historical relationship of continuities and interactions between 'local' and 'mafia' codes. My informants were confident in giving me three-generation back memories of the practice (i.e. since the agrarian reform).

<sup>23</sup> I take on board the attempt by historical anthropologists to see 'clan' as a male brotherhood, a horizontal coalition of men whose interests lie in controlling female production and reproduction (Tillion 1978; Goody 1983; 2000). 'Mafia' could be approached, in a similar way, construed in different ways from setting to setting. The ways the *clan* category is used in historical anthropology by Europeanists such as Goody (1973; 1976; 1983) are different from its emic use in Italian public discourse such as the media. Libera and other NGOs,



correlation between female work activity in the fields and contingent characteristics of Alcamo mafia, although directions of causality should be left open: it is probably the historical interaction between cultural codes local to Alto Belice and mafia that explains this situation. Such practices are rooted in localised labour regime histories that spill out of a framework of local political economy influenced to a degree by mafia. In Alcamo, for instance, a different historical development of the mafia produced conditions where gender had different implications from San Giovanni. Despite the lack of grounded ethnographic data from Alcamo, there is evidence of women being active in the local mafia, fulfilling roles traditionally adopted by men, which relates to the fact that, in Alcamo, ‘female labour in the fields was not devalued’ (“S” 14: 2009).

Anthropology supporting a shift ‘from structure and agency to livelihoods’ (Rigg 2007: 29–39), ‘draws on families’ strategies to position land ownership in an opaque status in order to guarantee their ‘livelihood security’ (Chambers 1998: 121). As alluded to above (footnotes 14 and 21), the ‘household responses’ approach (Pahl 1983) ignores internal differentiations, including gender differences, among household members (cf. Morris 1992). At the same time there are potentially multi-layered external influences on households (as Pahl (1984) argued, assessing the impact of state welfare schemes on household decision making). For these reasons, household-based accounts may be too blunt an instrument to explain why families in villages so close to each other, San Giovanni and Alcamo, follow such differently gendered tactics regarding work. Pointing to the complexity of both internal and external factors, in Alto Belice, women’s main income

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and the two most militant antimafia newspapers (*Repubblica*’s Palermo supplement, and the weekly “S”), both left leaning, use ‘clan’ to delineate male brotherhoods’ horizontal, compact alliances, as opposed to descent-based kinship relations. Italian state agents such as the Consortium, tap into this discourse of the need for a move ‘from the clans to the state’ (“S” vol 16). For an African example that suggest different lineage continuities, see Gray and Gulliver (2004). See also 6.3 for a discussion of the differences between clan and family.

<sup>24</sup> I quote from the actively antimafia periodical “S”, an investigative weekly. The editor, whom I met, was a hardliner regarding mafia. For instance, he once had told me that capital punishment should be introduced for *mafiosi*. Many articles, like the ones cited, for fear of mafia retaliations, were anonymous.

contribution to the livelihoods of their families was their position as ‘owners of the firm’ (*capoazienda*) i.e. the household land, largely through transfers of land that men had acquired through inheritance or purchase, or as dowry in marriage, and not through work in the fields. Ethnographic work from Southern Italy, interestingly, confirms that the exclusion of women from farm labour is not a general characteristic of Sicily or of the greater area (Schneider and Schneider 1976; Assmuth 1997; Pratt 1994; for women’s worth deriving from labour in Portugal, see Cole 1991). Pratt notes that in sharecropping women’s work was not ‘exclusively concerned with [home-based] activities’ and in fact [women] were not ‘isolated from a public world’ (Pratt 1994: 38; similarly: Silverman 1970).

Joining antimafia cooperatives constituted a double mechanism for local families. On the one hand, it impacted on their status in the village as antimafia families, as described in the previous chapter. For local men who worked as cooperative *braccianti*, this had further positive implications boosting their feelings of manliness. On the other hand, participating in the cooperatives’ regulated employment offered a surprising opportunity to sideline state regulations, as it were done in the face of the administrators’ claims to legality and regularisation of the local work regime.<sup>25</sup> This widely adopted livelihood strategy entailed taking on board the known risk of a state fine for benefits and pensions illegalities, as the government pursued legal enforcement on benefit fraud.<sup>26</sup> Registering land to wives continued, nevertheless, precisely as it now entailed a wide range of financial benefits for families, related to state welfare policies.

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<sup>25</sup> Pointing out contradictions in informants’ positionalities is not intended to somehow delegitimise them, or diminish the importance of their efforts to improve the workings of the local economy. Highlighting the discrepancy between discourse and practice is useful because only by acknowledging it can we – anthropologists and informants *together* – start to understand the constraints and possibilities under which economic endeavours such as cooperativism take place.

<sup>26</sup> This discussion proliferated later, related to the international discourse on the sovereign debt crisis, where it has been said that Italy’s (assumed) immense public deficit and adjunct sovereign debt are largely due to such schemes of employers’ contribution avoidance.

Sociological research from Italy has long emphasised the social consequences of the legal determination of certain labour activities as 'employment' (Mingione and Pugliese 2002; Pugliese and Rebeggiani 2004). Ethnographic analyses of small industrial manufacturing stress that the success of Italian capitalism, at least at this level of enterprise, was predicated on the mobilisation of informal labour contributions from family members (Mingione and Redclift 1985; Trigilia 1989, Mingione 1994), notably women's 'hidden' labour. Awareness of this process casts a shadow over the whole question of the visibility of female work and its consequent de-valuation (Goddard 1996; Goddard 2000). As anthropologists have also underlined, access to welfare benefits depends on registered employment and, in Italy, 'employment' and 'work' do not coincide (Goddard 1996; Assmuth 1997). The Italian welfare system has developed piecemeal, with somewhat haphazard outcomes overall (Blim 1990; Cole 1997). The institutional identification of valid work and employment, however, is hardly unique to the Italian state.

In fact, ethnographic work on the informal economy elsewhere discusses at length the consequences of modern states' conflation of employment and livelihood. This was already pointed out by Hart (1973) in respect to Ghana and also became a central issue in the European welfare state context. Mollona's work is one example. Examining the PAYE scheme in Britain, he argues that benefits provision, based on definitions of what counts as valid work, allowed and implicitly encouraged informal labour opportunities (2005; 2009b). This debate also relates to the discussion in the previous chapter on the boundaries of home and work, which in this case also prove blurred, both within *and* outside the cooperatives' framework.

The introduction of registered wage work via the cooperatives in Alto Belice (the 'standardisation') affected the relations of their families with welfare state provisions and policies. The sociological literature on labour regulation alludes to the Fordist security and stability of employment framework and the accompanying labour rights (Beynon 1984),

although this framework has long been abandoned in most EU countries. The normalisation that administrators talked about resonates with ethnographies of Eastern Europe (Creed 1998) describing people's aspirations to become part of a 'normal society', or sometimes speaking of 'a return to normality' (Rausing 2002: 127). Normalisation obviously can have different associations. Normalisation for cooperative administrators meant to promote regulated employment as against informal work as work relations in Alto Belice had been influenced by mafia patronage, which imposed non-legally protected work. However, local people's livelihoods were not 'normalised' or 'standardised'. Chambers argues that, social scientists risk error when institutional categories such as 'employment' count more for them than people's actual livelihoods priorities (2000). Men and women in Alto Belice, negotiated the visibility of their 'real' roles vis-à-vis the state in such a way as to claim more income from its welfare policy. Continuing with the practice of land registration to women, they were able to accommodate the legal normalisation of the cooperative employment. James Ferguson argues that, when the 'normative discourse' (1994: 26) of development agencies and the state fail to take local categories seriously, unintended consequences arise.

Local traditional roles of *capofamiglia* and *capoazienda* were reproduced despite wage employment was a strictly male work condition. *Capoazienda* and *capofamiglia* stem from broader gendered roles in Alto Belice, informed by mafia, premised on the condition that women were barred from agricultural work. These roles were also reproduced by state terminologies, codified in the census and other state documentation, the term itself *capoazienda* being a legal category and the bearer of tax liability. Therefore, people engaged in sophisticated activities in order to manage their multi-source gendered livelihoods. The roles were negotiated in relation to state policies and mafia influence, mafia and state mutually informing the gendered role allocation in Alto Belice households. Ethnographic work has identified 'gendered responsibilities' which would be trivialising to categorise as

just ‘tasks’ in the practices of peasants’ livelihoods (Mosse 2004: 63). Gendered divisions of labour in agriculture, often surrounded by ‘mystique’ (Ferguson 1994: 160–66; Mosse 2004: 62), deserve more attention, in order to comprehend people’s livelihoods outside the terms of a standardised wage employment political economy, which is often unable to account for irregular, seasonal and contingently gendered agrarian work. The attention to livelihoods (understood in a broad sense including household and inter-household practices) therefore nuances what was rhetorically identified in the vignette at the start of this thesis, as the core of the cooperatives’ contribution to change, namely the offer of employment and new work relations.

In Alto Belice’s gendered household practices, there are continuities in ‘cultural codes’ between local and mafia contexts, as Schneider and Schneider (1976: 84) have suggested. Michael Blim provides a neat account of the Schneider and Schneider’s argument, claiming that, while they sought to:

... disassociate themselves from [Banfield’s] blaming of underdevelopment on the Southern Italian and Sicilian people and their familist values ..., they did so ambiguously by arguing that ... the cultural values so nearly the same as Banfield’s familist values were the consequence of as well as the response to powerlessness and economic failure. (Blim 2006: 9)

In other words, the problem was that a political-economy-focused analysis did not fully displace the ‘honour and shame’ literature, as it kept the premise of ‘cultural codes’. By showing, however, how such codes inspire practices that co-articulate with antimafia cooperativism, I escape this problem, elucidating the contemporary relevance of local codes, their dynamic character and development in a new context, alongside regulated wage labour. In my ethnography, the survival of these codes is associated not with honour and shame but the fragility of people’s livelihoods, looking at the salience of the informal economy to the ways people pursued their income sources alongside registered work in the cooperatives. Their livelihoods articulate with both informal and standardised means of

income, in order to guarantee a decent living, mainly because of the low level of the cooperatives' wages, since most workers, as already noted, were not paid a monthly wage, unlike administrators.

I argue indeed that the state and the cooperatives unintentionally reproduce women's role as registered landowners *because* of the standardisation of labour the state and cooperatives promote. The cultural codes that surround these roles also reflect state policies (the benefits system) and cooperatives' strategies (not hiring women as fieldhands), and therefore are relevant to both mafia and antimafia families. While registration of land to women is not a novel practice, the role of wives as *capoazienda* became more embedded when their husbands entered regulated employment, as it brought a flow of unemployment benefits for their husbands. This land registration practice is an example of what I am calling a 'cultural code'. This continuity in cultural code thus show itself to be compatible with cultural variation and pluralism, in a changing Sicily (Schneider and Schneider 2006), which proves the historical dynamism of the concept, as these codes adapt to novel circumstances. Inasmuch it is registered work that counts as employment, and all work within the household is non-valorised in monetary terms, registering land to wives opened up the potential for more income opportunities. Women's absence from the fields and agricultural work signifies a set of practices that are the other side of the visibility that standardisation brought to wage employment.

Men's integration into the cooperatives' registered employment system thus intensified the local practice of registering land to women, adding further consequences to it. The practice is itself a consequence of the state policies defining what counts as valid work (registered, 'standardised' employment). However, the shift from informal *lavoro nero*<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Blim provides a thorough discussion of the variety of informal waged work practices in Italy that fall under the rubric of *lavoro nero* ('black [market] work'), including piece rate pay, or the famous *fuori busta*, in which some or all of the employer's work is not reported, to avoid taxation and social security contributions (1990: 162–64). Yanagisako also describes the widespread practice of 'unreported labour' as she calls it (2002: 137),

(unregistered labour) to registered employment among Alto Belice's antimafia families' men, remained incomplete. I earlier noted how the Pitrès explained that 20% of their income came from Pippo's 'work for friends'. In the next section, I elucidate this further.

### 5.3. 'Mutual Aid': Exchanging Informal Work

My ethnographic attention here shifts to examine male responsibilities in the constitution of what Chambers calls 'sustainable livelihoods' (1993: 92), elucidating how their informal work, outside the cooperative framework, added to the income of local households and how this type of livelihood became a political claim to defend in peasant mobilisations. Facilitated by their wives assuming the position of nominal *capoaziende*, this was a crucial supplement to their families' livelihoods. Local trade unionists had spoken to me, early in my fieldwork, about unregistered work for wages in Alto Belice (i.e. outside the 'standardisation' rules), after the agrarian reform of 1953. Although they had no formal statistics to hand, they confidently asserted that, in San Giovanni, 95% of males engaged in agrarian waged work were also landowners – which meant, unionists explained, that they engaged in informal work alongside farming. The local union representative of CGIL emphasised to me that the 'social backbone of our village is small land ownership – but most men are also engaged in informal wage work, to add up to their income'.

In late October 2009, Pippo took me in his car to a peasant demonstration in Palermo. On the way, he talked incessantly about politics, anxious to convince me that the event was a 'spontaneous protest', removed from unionised politics. It was just after the harvest and peasants had taken to the streets to pressure local government for more subsidies for their harvests. They thought that the prices offered by local wineries for their grapes were exploitative, averaging 20 eurocents per kilogram (see Figure 5.1) and were therefore demanding compensation for their losses through EU subsidies, administered by

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while Supiot underlines the fundamental importance of the *lavoro nero* institution for the Italian economy at large (2001).

the Sicilian Autonomous Region<sup>28</sup>. Thousands were gathered outside the majestic Palazzo dei Normanni, built in the 11<sup>th</sup> century and now the Parliamentary Assembly of the autonomous region of Sicily.

Meeting several of Pippo's colleagues on our way, we made our way through the crowds to the main focus of attention in the middle of Piazza Indipendenza, the huge square behind the Sicilian Parliamentary Assembly building. There, talking loudly, an enclave amidst the wider crowd, a group of men from San Giovanni were enjoying a mock 'funeral of Sicilian agriculture' staged by farmers from the neighbouring village of Principe. A coffin engraved with the words 'Alto Belice' was on public display, symbolising the death of the Alto Belice area. People surrounding the coffin told me that this was the first demonstration in which they had resorted to such 'gimmicks'. One man from San Giovanni was quick to explain that 'there has never been so much law enforcement and penalisation against us and so we have to be more vocal'. By 'penalisation', a term that other men invoked as well, I soon realised they meant the law enforcement against *lavoro nero* (unregistered work). After the success of the antimafia cooperatives, and the administrators' talk of 'standardising' labour relations, state agents had taken the issue of registered work more seriously. The police often raided the fields to check on wage labourers' documentation proving their legitimate, contractual work. The transgressors were penalised with heavy fines about unreported work. The normalisation and associated standardisation of legitimate work as registered wage employment was certainly being enforced in Alto Belice.

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<sup>28</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 3, Sicily has an autonomous status within Italy and the local government is colloquially called the 'Sicilian Region'. The island has its own parliament and its regional government decides a number of internal issues, including the channelling of EU agricultural subsidies. A month after my fieldwork ended, the previous (2004–08) Governor of the island, Totò Cuffaro, was sentenced to five years' imprisonment for 'mafia allegiance'. The configuration state/mafia was evidently more nuanced than would appear at first glance.



Many of the demonstrators I spoke to – some of them were my informants from the cooperatives – complained that ‘the state’ was penalising them for not paying employer’s labour contributions to ‘their’ harvest-time agrarian workers. Describing such fines as ‘penalties for our households’, they accused the state of being blind to the fact that the ‘agrarian workers’ these farmers paid in cash for their help in harvesting were ‘not ‘employees’ but friends and fellow peasants’, who were happy to offer their labour to their co-villagers on the basis of ‘mutual aid’. Among the voices in the crowd, I overheard feverish dialogues on this issue of fines. Some *sangiovannari* held a banner that read: ‘Stop penalising us, stop the fines.’ Coupled with the claim for harvest subsidies, this was a major demand voiced by peasants at the demonstration, as they regarded the extra income informal work contributed to people’s livelihood security as vital. The basic background to this demand was the fact, that by contrast to the practice of registering land in wives’ names, the system of informal exchange of labour was not invisible to law enforcement. In fact, the police had started to ‘crack down’ on this informal practice, raiding and prosecuting peasants in the rural areas of Sicily for *lavoro nero*, ‘black market’ employment.

The phrase ‘*ci rubiamo tra di noi*’, which literally translates as ‘we are stealing from each other’, was something that people kept repeating at the demonstration, in the many discussions I joined in. (The contextual translation of the phrase would be ‘it’s a system of mutual stealing’). In the heated atmosphere of the demonstration, and in a context where people felt they had to stress how paradoxical for the state agents, such as the police, the situation was, the expression ‘*ci rubiamo tra di noi*’ was, as it were, a response to accusations (and criminal charges) that they as ‘employers’ were robbing their ‘employees’ of social security contributions. As a peasant clarified to me, ‘if this is stealing, it is mutual, as between us it is turn and turn about: today’s ‘employer’ is tomorrow’s ‘employee’; so ‘we are “stealing” from each other’. Normally, they would refer to this mutual exchange of labour around harvesting as ‘mutual aid’. This system was an informal network formed by

interdependent households through bonds of friendship (and less often kinship) through which male agrarian work was exchanged in Alto Belice. Peasants who knew each other scrapped social security contributions to avoid expenses, since employer/employee status shifted back and forth. Each worked on the plot of the other, without ever paying or being paid the legal contributions they would have been due if they were in regular employment. Payment for work exchanged hands ‘under the table’. Thus they willingly rushed to their neighbours’ plot to help with his *vendemmia* (harvest) when they had finished with their own, and the cooperative’s plots, for some extra income. A day’s work was normally paid a (mutually agreed) average of 30 euros – but included a meal provided by the owner of the plot.<sup>29</sup> At a more complex level, such labour contributions also had the potential to manipulate the owner for a time, binding him to ongoing debt obligations (both financial and moral), as most peasants were unable to pay back their workers/fellow peasants for months.

Many cooperative workers laboured on a friend’s plot for a while, and then had him over to their own to work. Thus Pippo joined Adamo and Tano at their valley harvest in mid September and asked for their help with his plots in October, as the harvest on the higher Piana plains, where his vineyards were located, took place later in the year. Sometimes, these mutual agreements led to conversations about pending, delayed payments, which could disturb relationships. In the case of the Pitrès, I noticed that Pippo organised feasts in his house, in a couple of cases in late October indeed, to please his friends from Piana who had laboured in his plot. These five peasants owned land that neighboured Tano’s vineyards and were not linked to the cooperatives. Working on Pippo’s harvest, they had built up about 2000 euros of debt due to them. Uncomfortable, Pippo, after a generous meal, cracked open the best of last year’s wine to slacken the

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<sup>29</sup> Unlike work in the cooperatives, which was correspondingly more highly valorised in money terms (as mentioned) at 51.62 euros a day, plus employer’s social security contributions.

sarcastic comments about 'the pay from last harvest still being in limbo'. He had owed the payment to his five friends for more than a year.

Research interlocutors from the cooperatives shared the viewpoint that it was unfair for the state to penalise peasants for what they called their 'mutual aid' informal networks. At the same time, this widespread practice was to an extent informed by local mafia landowner labour patrons. Just like other peasants, they aimed to maintain a degree of invisibility vis-à-vis the state, as they were penalised for their 'mutual aid' scheme. Sharing with dissenting peasants, the emic term 'mutual aid', they identified in this system, a repertoire of social relations and, as many said, a 'way of Sicilian life' that they wanted to defend. The emic term 'mutual aid' is debatable, as it does not fully contain the reality on the ground. In fact, that local practice was more an organised exchange of fieldhands, rather than a scheme based on mutuality. It was, as I shall argue, more akin to informal economy practices drawing on discourses on 'community', 'tradition', and 'ways of life'.

In their demonstrations, local manual workers of the cooperatives, alongside other local peasants, raised claims vis-à-vis what they saw as 'the state' in its various manifestations: labour legislation, taxation, EU subsidies, the *Regione Sicilia*, the police and local politicians. Their demands included the de-penalisation of their *lavoro nero*. Peasant struggles in Alto Belice, as elsewhere, defended a heterogeneity, in a struggle between opposed 'ways of life' (Smith 1989: 24-25), at once integrated in a regulated framework (the cooperatives) and in informal relations ('mutual aid'), a struggle to maintain a fabric of social relations solidified in what they called 'the mutual aid' scheme. This stance was shared regardless of class differences or stratifications among peasants. They were, for this reason, also intricately linked with hierarchies encouraged by *mafiosi* influence, as a vignette will show below.

Peasant struggles were sometimes manifested in violent ways and were quite evidently influenced by local *mafiosi*. In Principe, an Alto Belice village, in early November

2009, 700 peasants piled up and burnt their citizen ID cards in a public ritual gesture disowning their Italian citizenship, to express how they felt ‘abandoned and penalised by the state’. The antimafia cooperative administrators condemned the event as excessive and dangerous. The role of *mafiosi* and politicians close to them was fundamental in encouraging *sicilianismo*<sup>30</sup> in peasant struggles (see also 3.1.3) as it offered a rhetoric of inter-class appeal through which *mafiosi* sought to incorporate peasants through claims to ‘the unity of the peasantry’ or ‘common interests for all Sicilians’. The rhetoric on the maintenance of ‘mutual aid’ often involved peasants of different classes: the peasant integration through it was equally premised on friendship relations across peasants and the mafia’s overarching patronage obscuring such class differences. *Mafiosi* who had prompted the Principe event called for similar activism across all Alto Belice villages. In Principe itself, before the ID card bonfire event took place, local *mafiosi* had publicly supported the idea that Sicilians should ‘follow the French farmers’ example<sup>31</sup>, in rejecting the state and its symbols. They had even suggested that each peasant brought and burnt their passports publicly. The policemen I talked with that day were confused about the appropriate response. The *Carabinieri* marshal thought that such massive ‘resistance’ could hardly be prosecuted, so the police were deployed in an observer role only.

The activity of the San Cipiriddu *mafioso* Baffi<sup>32</sup> is typical. Recently out of prison, he was a widely popular figure, regarded as the incumbent mafia ‘boss’ of the village. After

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<sup>30</sup> The historian Lupo suggests that the inter-war historical alliances of ‘the agrarian bloc’ promoted inter-class ideologies, pacifying social tensions, often guided by intellectuals waving the banner of *sicilianismo* (1981: 143–57), discussed in chapter 3, as part of a Gramscian discourse on hegemony’ (1981: 13). Santino has also used this Gramscian approach; accounting for the ‘recomposition of the dominant bloc’, he proposed that the entrepreneurial activity of the mafia formed ‘a parasitical bloc’ whose modality of reproduction is to constantly transform in order to adapt to new conditions (Santino 1977: 30-31). For this reason, the mafia refers to ‘*sicilianist* demagogy’ as a consensual alternative to coercive strategies of terrorism (Brigaglia 1977: 44-45). The mafia’s adaptation and emulation processes therefore, employ the language of *sicilianismo* (Santino 1977: 32; Marino 1979b) and Southernism (*meridionalismo*, cf. Pipyrou 2008). I noted similar developments in contemporary mobilisations of peasants in Alto Belice.

<sup>31</sup> This is a reference to French farmers’ mobilisations earlier that year.

<sup>32</sup> Gioacchino Nania, a local author in his 60s, widely known in San Giovanni, had published a book on the local history of mafia, tracing its origins to the *burgisi*, the rising intermediary middle class (the *gabelloti* and

another Palermo demonstration in Piazza Indipendenza, in early November, I joined the crowds of viticulturalists, driving in their tractors and cars back to San Giovanni. It was the day after the Principe event. Dozens of tractors were lined up outside the San Cipiriddu municipal hall when we arrived there in Tano's car. The compact main hall of the building was packed with peasants gathered to discuss ways forward for their mobilisations. I sat in one of the few free remaining seats. At one point, Baffi grabbed the microphone and addressed the public, smiling confidently, as he started speaking. His speech animated the crowd from the start. 'His charisma speaks for all of us,' an old man sitting beside me, said. Another old local man, on my other side, intervened and, in a soft-spoken way, started to lecture us on the capacities of 'that young man' who delivered the speech. Later, I found out that this interlocutor had for years been the chauffeur of the most important mafia boss Totò 'The Beast' Riina, the undisputable ex-leader of Cosa Nostra between 1980 and 1995, sentenced to life imprisonment in 1996, for heroin traffic and a number of assassinations.

Baffi attacked the 'oxygen doses they give us [peasants and farmers], just enough to keep us alive', meaning petty state funds for agriculture. Speaking against police prosecution of the practice, he insisted that the 'mutual aid' system was 'established as a tradition in the area' and was something that 'Sicilians just do and should be proud of doing'. A few youngsters sitting close to me, prompted him to 'speak in Italian', because, they quickly added, 'some around here do not grasp Sicilian very well,' referring to me. I started to become anxious about the mafia sympathies of my interlocutors. Everyone clapped when Baffi wrapped up. His speech was the high point of the evening. When he

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*senzali*), coexistent with feudal lords and largely subservient to them at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Nania 2000). The book is the result of research in state archives, where access is allowed 70 years after the events documented. Hence the book's historical narrative stops short in the late 1920s; nevertheless, it does mention some ancestors of *mafiosi* who currently are considered to 'command' (*cummannari*) in the village. The publication never caused him any worries: in fact, he was more afraid of the people he did *not* cite than of those mentioned in his book. Nania told me that Ignazio Baffi openly expressed his satisfaction that his grandfather *was* mentioned as a *mafioso*, 'for reasons of mafia pedigree', while the Di Maggio family, who were left unmentioned, complained the book was inaccurate, as they felt 'left out'.

finished, he started chatting with the mayor of San Cipiriddu, as the speeches went on.<sup>33</sup> He repeated this tactic at the next gathering, a few days later. On that occasion, in the same location, he appealed to ‘Sicilian unity’ and expressed ‘disregard for the state’ which ‘wants to suck taxes out of Sicily’ and ‘penalise local peasants’. After the evening was over, I headed to the main local pizzeria with Pippo. There, we accidentally encountered Baffi and the mayor, who were having a pizza together; as the mayor happened to like me, he invited us over and we joined them at their table for a little. Baffi told me at some point that ‘the law enforcement uses antimafia talk to put fines on us, as if everyone here is a *mafioso*’.

The *mafioso*’s appeal to this assumed sense of community among the peasants allows for comparisons between two realms in which cooperative workers were involved: the ‘mutual aid’ informal work exchange and the standardised employment in the cooperatives. Both made ideological claims to be horizontal, when in fact they were segregated across class differences, reflected in the cooperatives’ division of labour. Those employed in the cooperatives as member-workers or as daily workers, demanded both that their remuneration as waged workers be left intact *and* that their small farming businesses be left unregulated. These ‘mixed’ demands are not specific to Sicily. Most peasant movements include a variety of (often contradictory) claims, as identities of ‘peasants’ are increasingly enriched with a variety of work experiences such as waged labour. Gavin Smith’s (1989) concept of ‘resistance’ is relevant here; the concept is related to livelihoods because it encapsulates those contextualised struggles that defend a ‘way of life’ that is shared, in specific cultural codes, across different people. Smith notes for Huasicanchinos that ‘not only did they have a long history of intense political struggle but also their experience of those spectacular moments is inseparable from their *daily* struggle for a livelihood’ (1989: 12). Peasants’ struggles for the bettering of their livelihoods extend

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<sup>33</sup> I refer to this peasant gathering at length to illuminate the role *mafiosi* like Baffi played in the local community; in *events* like this, as Geertz (2008) suggested, certain meanings in local people’s lives come to the surface.

beyond the realm of ‘political economy’ to include a series of organised behaviours and practices, such as ‘anti-state’ mobilisations and household practices. Smith’s account centres on ‘a culture of opposition’ (1989: 235–36), influenced by Thompson’s notion of class (1970) and underlining discursive practices. In Alto Belice, there are tensions between the peasants’ incorporation in antimafia cooperatives and some of their gendered practices (registration of land to wives and exchange of informal work among men), as well as their political struggles – as they were both influenced by mafia ethics and activity. When they evoke their ‘traditions’ in opposing the state, the discourse around this opposition conceals class differences among them.

Kearney notes that ‘the cultures of the peasant’ dynamically incorporate a plurality of traditions in their joint mobilisations, arguing against the way that social theory has reified ‘the peasant’ as a rigid category (Kearney 1996: 4). The status of the cooperatives’ manual workers and member-workers is mixed, as they are at once landowners and waged workers (in both informal and regulated frameworks), and when they evoke their ‘traditional way of life’ they are reflecting on this mixed status. In many cases, people’s ‘rural pluriactivity’ in Mediterranean regions implies that they are partially integrated into wage dependencies, arranged around claims to continuing the ‘cultural tradition of a place’ (Narotzky and Smith 2006: 27 and 31). Such appeals to traditions are akin to the ‘way of life’ defended by *mafiosi* and antimafia cooperative members alike in Alto Belice’s mobilisation over the ‘mutual aid’ schemes.

Invoking this local ‘way of life’ draws on ideas of mutuality, and alongside those, claims to income for ‘our households’: maintaining the ‘mutual aid’ scheme was a crucial financial matter for them. But the local ‘traditions’ it refers to should be problematised. Although community and ‘the house’ are notions powerfully analysed in Gudeman’s model, I should clarify that the ‘mutual aid’ scheme of work cannot be classified as exchange *as* mutuality (Gudeman 2008: 27). Exchange of money involved in the *lavoro nero*

between peasants implied commodification of labour. Moreover, what forms 'the base' in the case of Colombian peasants (Gudeman and Ribera 1990) is, for antimafia cooperatives workers, dislocated away from work on their own plot and towards the cooperatives' employment, the system of mutual exchange being a supplementary exchange of work among households for extra cash. As Pippo said, the Pitre's family wage was the cooperative's roughly 100 days of paid work per year.

In fact, as shown above, although the remuneration of the manual workforce from the cooperatives was nowhere as good as the administrators, wages from the cooperatives were the main source of income for their households, as well as state benefits, again elicited from the cooperatives. Pratt also notes this transformation towards a waged work orientation in the case of Tuscany (Pratt 1994: 66). Gudeman's point on the dialectics between mutuality and trade implying tensions between community and market suggests the different 'realms' he recognises in 'mutuality' and 'market' (2008: 24). This argument draws on the presumed solidarity of community relations resting on self-help and subsistence agriculture, which Gudeman has stressed<sup>34</sup> (1978; 1986; Gudeman and Ribera 1990). I take on board the argument, to the extent that my ethnography shows how access to resources (land, labour, reputation) is organised across different moral claims and values (by and large the administrators subscribing to jural categories of regulation such as coop 'employment' and the workers to local codes, such as 'mutual aid' work). But Gudeman's scheme should be nuanced, acknowledging the penetrative power of actors, pertaining to some local codes and practices, and consequently influential in the reproduction of informal economy schemes, dubbed as 'mutual aid'. In the context of Alto Belice, this flies in the face of the antimafia cooperatives' 'standardisation' of employment. In Alto Belice,

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<sup>34</sup> Gudeman downplays the issue of waged work and commodification in his monograph, as Stephen Nugent points out (1981), arguing that 'the ghost of subsistence' overshadows the introduction of commodification and wage labour into what Gudeman calls the 'community' sphere of people's economic lives in Los Boquerones (1978). Gudeman has, to an extent, revised his earlier views (2009).



the ideological backdrop of community is in fact vested in the informal economy (*lavoro nero*).

To consider that ‘community-based’ ways of life, such as the ‘mutual aid’ system (and the mafia’s endorsement of it) are removed from labour markets, would echo the romantic logic that mafia is archaic and premodern (tackled in 2.1). Instead, what *mafiosi* describe (and promote) as ‘traditional’ practices should in fact be historicised in a context of gradual crisis in produce prices (grapes) (already alluded to in 3.2.4), which pushed peasants into waged labour for friends as well as for mafia richer farmers (as I show in the next chapter). Defending the ‘mutual aid’ – or ‘mutual stealing’ system – is a logical attempt to safeguard enclaves of (what is registered for the state as) commodified ‘illicit’ practices of informal economy in a context where the rising tide of the antimafia in the area reinforced the state’s regulatory mechanisms. What is more, these work relations, part of the livelihood practices of locals, developed *alongside* (rather than against) the locals’ involvement in regularised waged work in the cooperatives. The extra income workers earned from ‘mutual aid’, as well as the benefits the daily workers (but not the permanent coop member-workers) acquired from land registration to their wives, eased tensions within their cooperatives. The existence of informal practices, *alongside* their regular employment in the cooperatives, brought their income to levels comparable to that of their administrative colleagues, alleviating income differences within the cooperatives; as many in the workforce said: ‘At least we have the extra work’. What is more, the benefits daily workers acquired bridged any internal differences *within* the manual workforce teams, as their annual income matched (via benefits) that of their fellow member-workers. This prevented further stratifications in the cooperatives, among participants in the manual workforce teams.

As the term ‘moral economy’ denotes a weaving together of economic activity with community belonging, the local workers’ idea of the moral economy was arranged around

ways to pursue their livelihoods outside and parallel to the ‘standardised’ political economy of the cooperatives’ waged employment. Mafia’s endorsement of the practice leads me to agree with Hann’s critique of the concept of moral economy (2011: 196). Specifically, neither Polanyi, associated with the concept of moral economy nor Thompson, considered to have fathered the notion, account for the fact that the normative nature of a moral economy’s appears to include activities which are of ambiguous moral content, for the sake of bettering people’s livelihoods, if we, like Thompson, think in terms of class (1970; 1991). The inter-class appeal of *mafiosi* to ‘tradition’ through ‘mutuality’ certainly reproduced class stratification in the peasantry. In Alto Belice, peasant mobilisations developed as partially aligned to mafia, as actors of the local society resisted state regulations and market injustices. In Polanyi’s ‘double movement’, society reacts to economic deregulation by, for example, protectionist legislation (see 2.1) while in the Alto Belice case it was peasants defending their sense of community: commodified but non-regular economic relations, ‘ways of life’.

In Alto Belice, locals are invested in the state and the cooperatives’ regulation in contradictory ways: while some of their informal practices are reinforced by workers’ rights regularisation, some others are threatened by it. Moreover, in its Sicilian configuration, the interaction of regulated employment and informal *lavoro nero* as joint sources of livelihood of the antimafia cooperatives’ workers was, ironically, informed by mafia activity and demagogy. Farmers mobilised in Alto Belice to defend their multiple statuses, denouncing the Italian state in terms often associated with mafia influence. These two characteristics, state standardisation of activity on the one hand and mafia influence on the other, are contextualised in a specific conjuncture of change and continuity in contemporary Sicily.

However, in reflecting on the plural claims of peasants to defend their livelihoods, Kearney’s notion of (post-) peasant ‘hybridity’ (1996: 68) is not applicable here even though people build on entirely diversified and often contradictory categories of income

seeking. 'Hybridity' entails a mingling of some sort. By contrast these two realms, of formal and informal labour (state standardisation of activity on the one hand and mafia influence on the other) correspond to two different, although juxtaposed ideas of 'community': one is the Consortium's idea that community is achieved through state intervention and the other pitches community *against* state regulations (related to penalisation and standardisation) (interesting analogies can be drawn with collective tax refusals, as per Roitman 2005). These cannot be 'hybridised' since the informal labour and standardised employment cannot be brought into the same space or negotiated without friction. Workers waged from the antimafia cooperatives added to their income through petty informal and illegal work for friends. This co-existence of formal income opportunities and other means of securing a livelihood, in the case of land registration to wives, reinforced the informal practice. In the case of the informal work scheme of the 'mutual aid' system among male workers-peasants, the coexistence of continuity and transformation entailed fissures that led to law enforcement (fines on peasants).

The mafia's demagogy, as in Baffi's case, ideologised the informal work exchange of peasants, using community idioms such as 'ways of life' (an idea in itself sufficiently popular as a consensus for mobilisation among peasants). Predictably, *mafiosi* also invoked the need to defend the informal way of life of local Sicilians. The mafia's influence on peasant mobilisation intensified many people's beliefs that 'only unity can save the peasantry', and that all farmers and peasants, beyond internal stratifications, should fight against the 'miserly state of Rome'. In the same way peasants defended their practice of 'stealing from each other', as they thought it allowed informal cooperation and solidified local social relations. Their struggles aimed to incorporate this informal status *within* what were becoming increasingly more complex relations involved in making ends meet, with ever more regulated wage employment frameworks.

This ideological glossing of the practice of ‘stealing from each other’ suggests further reflections on *lavoro nero*. Here, informal work does not draw from pooling from familial labour or from relationships *within* the same family, as in most areas covered by the relevant Italian ethnography (Blim 1990; Goddard 1996; Yanagisako 2002). Rather, *lavoro nero* (informal work) in Alto Belice is a system of mutual support *among* male peasant agrarian workers, which sustains a nexus of social relationships: it was this specifically that many informants identified as a ‘way of life’ and felt it was their right to defend. This is a contingency specific to Alto Belice and its (mafia-influenced) lack of female labour in the fields – and hence also the lack of ‘pooling’ from household labour, so popular in the *lavoro nero* literature (Blim 1990; but also Lucifora 2003; Buffa 2008).

This mafia influence also affects when people suddenly start talking about ‘the state’ as an abstract and hostile entity, while in other contexts (cooperative employment), they speak of the same institution in different, less hostile, terms. Seeing the state as ‘sucking taxes out’ while contributing nothing is perhaps the classic peasant attitude that one is led to expect by the existing literature, such as Eric Wolf’s famous statement in *Peasant Wars* that ‘peasants in rebellion are natural anarchists’ (1969: 295). It is part of the definition of peasants, in fact, that they are potentially self-sufficient but have things extracted from their household economy. In Alto Belice, peasant members of the antimafia cooperatives experienced the multiple ways they are invested in the state in contradictory ways. Specifically, practices *within* their households (registration of land to wives) went unnoticed, while practices *among* their households were more visible and hence vulnerable to penalisation by the state’s law enforcement. Therefore, the ‘legal’ standardisation of labour rights interacted with the informal everyday economic life of individuals and families.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the interactions between the ‘standardisation’ of people’s registered work status, i.e. the legal regularisation of labour relations, in the antimafia cooperatives and their supplementary informal activities in pursuit of a better livelihood. I have argued that local practices aimed at guaranteeing households’ livelihood security have evolved alongside the cooperatives’ standardised employment. These practices involve ‘ghostly’ activities, often illicit and indeed in line with the local mafia’s ideologies. People’s struggles to maintain the regular, cooperative wage work alongside these local practices, make the official, visible political economy converge with an invisible, and strongly gendered, realm of local livelihood practices. Their ‘mixed’ statuses as employee/wage earners and independent peasant proprietors are at once reinforced *and* contested by the standardisation promoted by cooperatives. In the case of registering land in wives’ names, standardisation, ironically, facilitated the flow of unemployment benefits that could be classified as illicit. By contrast, the exchange of informal waged work among men is hindered by standardisation, which penalises their ‘mutual aid’ scheme.

While formal employment remuneration through cooperative wages was not sufficient, people’s involvement in cooperatives added a surprising further source of annual income to families through unemployment benefits, negotiated through the informal practice of registering wives as *capoaziende*. The forms of waged work in the cooperatives, articulated together with other, informal, means of livelihood (made possible, indirectly, through involvement with cooperatives) did bring transformations in people’s lives. This was not only because of the financial gains that labour standardisation brought to households but also because the regulation regime shifted the meaning of informal local practices, continuous with local ‘codes’, as in Schneider and Schneider (1976). This chapter has elucidated this interrelation of informal and formal economic practices, where ‘political economy’ and ‘livelihood practices’ are each an element *within* the other. Overall,

participation in the cooperatives thus floods into people's livelihoods in ways that cannot be contained in the political economy of waged labour entailed in cooperativism. As in Chapter 4, the rhetoric of *a* (single) model of antimafia cooperativism, assumed by administrators and state agents (the Consortium) failed to encompass the implicit (although not explicitly backed by rhetoric) model of cooperativism practised by workers – the experience of participating in cooperatives for their antimafia families.

For these participants, their interlocked condition 'between' informal and regulated activity became a matter of gendered household plans and political mobilisation. This condition, I argue, shows the locals' livelihoods as enmeshed in a relationship between informal income continuities and the transformations introduced by standardisation. This in turn on the one hand alleviated the income differences between member-workers and daily workers (through benefits the latter received); on the other hand, it casted serious doubt on the presumed horizontality of the antimafia cooperatives. The cooperatives did not succeed in encompassing locals in a realm of stable employment, as local families continued their practices of income seeking outside the cooperative regulated framework, unlike the administrators. The key factor drawing in local participation in the cooperatives was regular waged labour; but they also continued informal practices alongside it.

The idea (and ideal) of cooperativism *as a form of work* (implied in the politicised project of curbing the mafia) is critical because it opens the way to rethink the definition of labour, which is, of course, already in contradiction with legal definitions, notably the one encapsulated in the standardisation of waged work on the model of employment. The work of what Marxists call social reproduction (Narotzky 1997: 158-159) always falls off the map, since it is mostly not commodified and also generally assumed to be mainly women's work. (At the same time, the work of creation of *non-market* value (e.g., political), such as the cooperatives themselves, is, if anything, even more ignored *as labour*). Taking this labour into account re-signifies the range of meanings of informal practices: developing against a

backdrop of registered ('standardised') work, these practices become impregnated with new potential. Informal work activities therefore become a crucial facet of social reproduction, as important as 'employment' (Narotzky 1997: 36-37) and in the case of benefits, dependent on it. Smooth employment relations in the cooperatives were *also* dependent on informal work, as informalities alleviated stratifications (within the manual workforce) and across workers and administrators, bringing all members to comparable income statuses. The integration of male peasant-workers of Alto Belice into a regime of standardised regulation/registered work ('employment') then, affected the established livelihood practices of local households in different ways. On the one hand, it reinforced the practice of legally registering land to wives, accumulating novel and beneficial consequences to it, by facilitating unemployment benefits for their husbands. On the other, the regime formed part of a broader state strategy to regulate and standardise labour relations, which resulted in the penalisation of local 'mutual aid' labour schemes.

In the face of such legalised regularisation of labour relations, people defended their 'ways of life', mobilising, in struggles influenced partly by mafia, to demand the legalisation of their 'mutual aid' schemes. Peasant struggles often develop in ways not beneficial to the majority of the peasantry (McMichael 2008). Being employed by the cooperatives (and hence rendering part of one's labour visible to the state) exacerbated the informal economic outcomes of land registration to wives. In this configuration, people mobilised practices, informed by gendered local codes, also influenced by mafia. Therefore, perhaps ironically, in Sicilian 'antimafia families', practices that were popular partly due to mafia influence gained new ground, their meanings reconfigured. The experience of antimafia cooperativism did not tackle the informal income practices in which people were enmeshed; rather, it developed as a transformation arranged 'alongside' a set of continuities in people's day-to-day lives. In the next chapter I shall explore this further, looking at the social arrangements around land plots, confiscated and not.

# Chapter 6

## The Value of Property and the Values of Ownership: Continuities and Contiguities among Land Plots

### Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed waged work employment as a material resource offered *by* the cooperatives. Here, I explore the material resource bestowed *on* the cooperatives by the state: land and, specifically, land confiscated from mafia. Evidently, when it comes to land, these are connected: the cooperatives provide their members, access to land, that has been granted to them by the state. My central hypothesis is that property constitution embodies a variety of values incorporated in the land.

The aim of this chapter is twofold. Firstly, I seek to answer the question what were the factors that shaped the antimafia asset confiscation legislation? Although cooperative access to land was arranged around the apparently neutral ideology of legality, through which kinship was meant to be sidelined,<sup>1</sup> I show that the constitution of relevant legal categories relating to land confiscation included kinship categories resulting in a crucial distinction between two different types of property in land, a distinction that continues to reverberate day to day in Alto Belice: *familiare* and *propria*.

Secondly, and more important, I aim to answer the question what social arrangements were clustered around the land cultivated by the cooperatives? Following Scott (1998; 2010) and Ferguson (1994), I look at the consequences of legal and political discourse ‘on the ground’ (metaphorically and literally). Some of the most important consequences for the social arrangements regarding land tenure developed because of the existence of rigid legal categories (*familiare* and *propria*). I focus specifically on how people

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<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in Chapter 4, I suggested that meritocracy was the state’s main value in respect to recruitment in antimafia cooperatives, sidelining kinship.



experienced and reflected on land adjacencies (contiguities) between confiscated and non-confiscated mafia land. I examine neighbours' continuing past practices in the face of these property changes and the ways that cooperative members (administrators and workers) responded differently. I argue that these contiguities and continuities developed not despite the rupture in local property regimes that the mafia land confiscation brought about, but *because* of it.

Stratified across the two-tiered organisation of labour in the cooperatives, some members considered land plot boundaries to be 'lines of contact' while others construed them as 'moral borders'. The cooperatives' administrators saw, in the confiscated plots, the moralisation of the values of legal property, partly because the property remained with the state. Conversely, local workers and worker-members saw confiscated land as space for contact with neighbours, recognising *the values of moral ownership*, which were in tune with the actual social arrangements around land.

These social arrangements regarding land manifest a pattern of both continuity and transformation (Mundy 2007): change stems from legal decisions and continuity from local practices. The confiscations project left the legal status of many mafia-owned plots unchanged: some were confiscated (*proprie*) and some were not (*familiari*). On the one hand, the confiscations entailed radical change: based on the idea of mafia activity being invested (literally and metaphorically) in a land plot, the confiscation law disrupted the pre-existing 'geography' of property status on the ground, as the state took away plots from *mafiosi* proprietors and bestowed them on cooperatives. On the other hand, non-confiscated plots still belonging to *mafiosi* (so-called *familiari* plots), entailed continuities with past social arrangements around land: for instance, contiguous plots involved interactions between cooperatives members and *mafiosi*.

I have discussed some theoretical issues relevant to land in 2.3. I now describe continuities and contiguities developed around land plots acknowledging their

interrelationship, which I identify with the idea of moral ownership. I show that the recognition of *mafios*'s moral ownership of land, manifested in many locals' reminiscences, and based on some *mafios*'s continuous agricultural activity on their *familiari* plots, led to continuations of past practices. The folk conception of moral ownership contrasts with legal property.

My overarching premise is that property embodies a variety of values incorporated in the land, to decide whether to confiscate or not. More importantly, the state-regulated 'value' of confiscated land is juxtaposed to a range of local values. As Graeber notes, 'values' and 'a single system of value' compete and interact (2001: 1–2). The central point then is how local values and codes expressing them (moral ownership) relate to the state's system of value (legal property). In the case of confiscated land, there is a contrast between local continuities informed by moral ownership and a legal regime imposed through radical change. In that light, I show how property's reconstitution, in the application of the law, creates a series of social arrangements, which suggest continuities alongside change (Holston 1991): gendered transmissions, continuations of past activities, moral recognition of past proprietors.

The land plots offer an excellent ethnographic instance to consider how social values persist over time but are dynamic and subject to change. Various personal trajectories contribute to shaping property as a plateau of intersecting agencies and thus as a political realm. The property statuses and the social experience of land uses in Alto Belice are built on conflicting and contesting claims and counterclaims, premised on different ways of recognising values. The overarching system of values codified in legislation is contested by local values deployed around moral ownership. These claims are reproduced by locals, in order to make sense of the experience of working on, or in a plot adjoining a confiscated land plot. The contiguities between confiscated and *familiari* plots further

elucidate the moral divergences within the cooperatives: for some people, land boundaries become ‘moral borders’ and for other people they become ‘spaces of contact’.

### **6.1. Categories of Property (*Familiare* and *Propria*)**

The Brusca family owned plots of land<sup>2</sup> near their, now abandoned, home on the outskirts of San Giovanni. These land tracts, used as vineyards, were not confiscated when Giovanni and Vincenzo, the older sons of the family, both *mafiosi*, were arrested, in 1996 (Giovanni had already been convicted *in absentia* for multiple murders). The reason those vineyards close to the house were not confiscated, unlike others outside the village, was that they were part of the inheritance of their mother, Antonia Brusca and thus did not derive from ‘mafia activity’. Taking a stroll around the impressive villa of the Bruscas with some of the cooperative workers, we ended up walking amongst vines. I was intrigued by the workers’ stories about the surrounding landscape: they had all worked in that vineyard in the past, during the early 1990s, when Giovanni Brusca was still at large. The pay was not great and the workload heavy; but, as Nicola told me, ‘Once a Brusca asked you, you could not really turn down the offer of work’.

Having worked for a few months in viticulture for the cooperatives, I could tell that the muddy soil was neglected and the vines were dying. All the men agreed that this plot of the Bruscas had, until recently, been very productive: Nicola reminisced how he had worked there in the 1990s as part of ‘mutual aid’ between him and the *mafioso*. The workers called the land tract a ‘*familiare*’ (familial) or ‘*storico*’ (historical) plot of the Brusca family. Adamo recalled a time in the mid 1990s when he and Niki worked together there on the harvest. Both men remarked what ‘a pity’ it was that, although non-confiscated, these

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<sup>2</sup> Mapping is significant in this type of ethnography; also, geographers have shown how the multiplicity of mapping techniques helps gather a fuller image of a territory, and land tracts in particular (Abrams and Hall 2006). As well as the narrative descriptions here, I also use two other methods of mapping the territory of my investigation: tables in the text and Cadaster maps in Appendix 5.

vineyards now lay uncultivated. They inspected the vines and showed me that the soil was not productive anymore.

As described in 5.3, Antonia Brusca had never involved herself in managing these vineyards of hers, nor did she start to after her children (all male) were sent to prison. Adamo said that he ‘felt for the vineyard,’ feeling pity also for the proprietor who had forsaken it: ‘It shows how they morally feel for it... the mother could not cultivate what she feels belong to her son.’ (Years before, she had informally handed over the usufruct of the plot to Giovanni.)

I enquired further as to what the concept of *familiare* meant. Initially I had thought that, if vineyards belonged to *mafiosi* families, surely they would be confiscated. Discussing these questions with lawyers and the Consortium administrators responsible for overlooking the confiscations project, it was explained to me that the term ‘historical’ (*storico*) implied family history (genealogy and inheritance) and ‘familial’ (*familiare*) implied belonging to the family unit.<sup>3</sup> From the point of view of land confiscation, I found that they functioned as equivalent terms, designating plots that had not been confiscated because it had been proven that the *mafioso* owner had acquired them in ways other than the ‘usurping’ entailed in ‘mafia accumulation activity’ (Focus 2001). Inheritance and dowry were the main ways *mafiosi* acquired land tracts with *familiare* status.<sup>4</sup> The Bruscas’ mother Antonia had ‘given’ her plots to her son Giovanni (as explained above) but retained the title to the property herself. Being a woman, she was not a member of the Alto Belice mafia. Because of this, the plots were never confiscated; but as Giovanni was in prison, Antonia felt it was presumably not proper, as a woman, to work on them.

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<sup>3</sup> The terms *familiare* and *storico* describe the same thing; however, *storico* has a legalistic air and is consequently used more in written documents, as it appears more official a term than that more popular with informants, *familiare* (plural: *familiari*). I shall use the *familiare* term in the present text, for this reason.

<sup>4</sup> This is for example the case when a legatee acquires assets through matrilineal descent – not the case here. The land, when *mafiosi* become heirs of their mothers is deemed *familiare* and therefore legitimately remains as the property of the incarcerated *mafioso*.

By contrast, there is the legal category ‘individual property’ (*proprietà propria*). When convicted, the *mafioso* has to prove the innocent origin of his assets.<sup>5</sup> If he cannot support his claim that he acquired a land piece of property in lawful ways, the property is legally presumed to be the offspring of his mafia activity. Thus, land that falls into this category is confiscated because it is taken that (absent proof to the contrary) it has been acquired through illicit means: through *mafiosos*’s ‘dirty money’ or violent usurping (from the ‘community’). This is also the case with plots formally in another person’s name but where that proves to be a ‘straw person’.<sup>6</sup> The nominal registration of property to a straw person did not offer legal protection: the property of a *mafioso* is still considered his (*propria*) so long as he has control over how it is used, and has hence to be confiscated.

In Alto Belice, (as discussed in 5.2), only male members of a mafia family worked the land. Antonia Brusca had given usufruct rights to a male child (a *mafioso*) but retained the legal title; as that title came from her inheritance, it was not derived from mafia activity, and was thus non-confiscatable. Property carries particular values: a land plot incorporates or embodies personal effort, such as the ‘honest labour’ of a San Giovanni mother’s child rearing or simply any labour ‘done outside of mafia activity’, as Lucio told me. For the state, notions such as family and honest work had moral legitimacy in this sense, associated to the Consortium’s abstract (divorced from local experience) idea of community and commons. Social bonds of kinship are therefore integrated in legal and ideological approaches to property’s statuses, including the ‘mother–child’ relationship and the inheritance potential it engenders. Such processes form *familiare* property, rendering some *mafiosi*-owned plots ‘non-confiscatable’. A *familiare* plot incorporates kinship values and a kind of work seen in a positive light. In that sense, work and ownership claims

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<sup>5</sup> Another way to approach this though legal theory is to point that, because of the reverse burden of proof the starting presumption is that all a convicted mafioso’s property comes from illicit/mafia activity and it is for him to prove it is not, so pointing to its being *familiare* is one way of doing that.

<sup>6</sup> As discussed (1.1.2), straw people were those to whom *mafiosi* registered their plots, without their having any actual say about the assets’ management.

incorporated in a *familiare* land plot are seen as ‘clean’ by definition (family values, honesty, morality).

The respect shown towards family values is significant here. Labour valued differently by the state (i.e. the child-rearing labour of Brusca’s mother incorporated in her plots) can cleanse a potentially hazardous intergenerational property transmission.<sup>7</sup> This transmission is, in this instance, gendered. It is evident that gender relations are fundamental in respect to inheritance because the plots owned by Brusca’s father, himself a *mafioso*, had to be confiscated. Mafia is male, in that respect, and a woman is, by definition, considered a non-member.<sup>8</sup> A male *mafioso* proprietor’s transmission of land plots as lawful inheritance to his child is rejected and his plot cannot be classified as *storico* or *familiare*.

As the two values (gender and labour) are interdependent in the formation of inheritance practices, they open up new meanings to the intersection of time and space of the confiscated land plots. Interestingly, the transmission of property through inheritance cannot succeed if the transmission is tainted by values seen as negative by the state, such as mafiosity (*mafiosità*). The co-existence of mafia *familiari* and confiscated plots, I soon found out, yielded surprising continuities in local practices, carried alongside contiguities of plots, which, now recategorised, had a common boundary. The social arrangements around

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<sup>7</sup> The definition *storico* meant also a shift in generations, which ‘resets the clock’. There are cases, in Italy, I was told (although I did not come across any in Alto Belice), where a plot’s *propria* property status was ‘cleansed’ through legal processes that take into account the passing of time. This reflects a concession in the light of the harsher penalisation regime for mafia-related crimes inaugurated with the 1983 legislation (introduction of mafia crime) (Art. 416 *bis* cp, 157cp). The prescribed sentences for mafia crimes are more than for other crimes (10 to 15 years, Art. 157 c.p). See fn 16 in Chapter 1. Art 14 *bis* cp clarifies that there can be no early release from prison for mafia crimes.

<sup>8</sup> There is some debate regarding the extent to which mafia clans reproduce themselves matrilineally, the womanly figure seen as sacred (Dino 1997) or whether indeed there is female membership in mafia at all (Longrigg 1998). Italian feminist sociologists such as Puglisi, theorising the ‘other side of the mafia’, speak of some 2-3% of female ‘membership’ in the Sicilian Cosa Nostra, but stress the overwhelming presence of women in the antimafia movement (2005). Siebert questions the relevance of the ‘feminine subjectivity’ at large in the mafia context, although she admits that female participation in the Calabrian mafia has been part of an ambiguous emancipatory process regarding gender relations in the region (2003). In the previous Chapter, I have noted the existence of mafia clans where women seem to play a significant role, in Alcamo, a town close to San Giovanni.

neighbouring plots show some locals' will to continue enduring relationships, despite the change the confiscations had introduced.

## 6.2. Continuing Practices and Moral Ownership

### 6.2.1. Changed property, persisting relationships

The old gentleman Ciccio Corso had a reputation for good manners and the nickname '*u sigareddu*', as he always strolled around his native village Chiana with a cigar between his lips during the time he was the leader of the village's main mafia clan<sup>9</sup>, in the 1990s. In the stories I heard about him (he died two years before I started fieldwork), some people emphasised to me that his mafiosity (*mafiosità*) had not been passed on to his daughters Caterina and Serafina, who were 'honest people' who had 'inherited his land normally': being female, they were immune to mafia-related accusations. One of Corso vineyards had been confiscated, as interlocutors from the Falcone explained, and the cooperative had its usufruct.

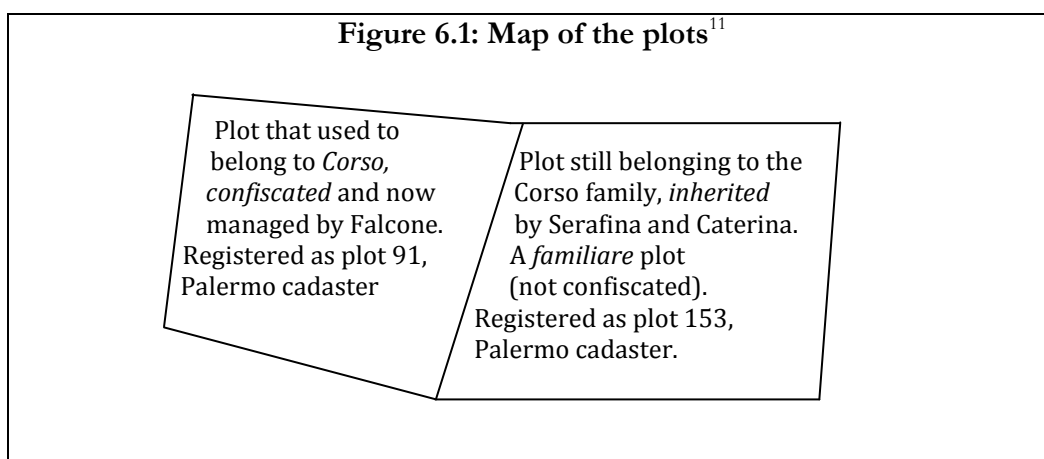
Some cooperative members had met Corso in person. Piero told me about his life as a young man (when he was about 25, in 2000) and living in a derelict rented shelter in the countryside, where he cultivated his plot (1.5 ha of vineyard), at an altitude of 700m in the Chiana heights. (People in the village described Piero's life during that period as 'feral'.) While he was there, he met *sigareddu*, whose vineyards were very close to his tiny piece of land. Piero, a young and charming man, spent hours every day talking about hunting with the old man. Corso liked him so much that he introduced him to his daughters, who managed the two plots, although they did not manually work them. Serafina was older than Piero and she was a committed peasant entrepreneur but Caterina was still a student of

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<sup>9</sup> I have already noted (fn 2, section 2.3 and fn 8, this Chapter; see also Appendix 3), in passing, what 'clan' implies in this context. In the latter part of this Chapter, I explain the connection between *propria* property and 'clan', as distinguished from *familiare* property, which relates to 'family'.

biology at the University of Palermo. Piero brought her fox cubs to play with, which she found particularly endearing, and they enjoyed themselves together.

At the time of fieldwork, almost 10 years after that first meeting with Corso, Piero still saw Caterina and Serafina whenever he visited the part of their family land that had been confiscated from their father and allocated to Falcone. Ciccio ‘*u sigareddu*’ Corso, the boss of the mafia in Chiana, was arrested in 2003. Piero claimed that, before then, he had had no idea about Corso’s mafia involvement; in 2009, he still rang the sisters to have a chat whenever he went to the plot to check up on things.<sup>10</sup> Although Piero’s antimafia opinions had grown stronger since 2000, his affection for those vineyards and the Corso sisters had not changed. Property relations may fluctuate – but interpersonal relations persist, even in the face of shifts in property statuses. The family’s land tracts were all bar one (the only one categorised as *familiare*) confiscated (See Figure 6.1). Around that piece of land, a perhaps minor social arrangement continued, related to local values that transcended legalistic approaches to property.



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<sup>10</sup> Piero’s lack of knowledge about Corso being *mafioso* should not be seen as naive; instead, it shows the mafia’s banality, how mundane are the relationships people of the cooperatives entered into with local families, ignoring their links to mafia clans.

<sup>11</sup> This map is a schematic projection of a detail from a broader map from the Italian Cadaster, which can be found in Appendix 5 [map II], with relevant commentary.



**Figure 6.2: The gendered transmission of *familiare* property**

[*signora* Corso (as dowry) → Corso *father* → Serafina *daughter*  
Allowed inheritance from a *mafioso* to a non-*mafioso*

Antonia *mother* → G.Brusca *son*  
Informal transmission from a non-*mafioso* to a *mafioso*

After detailed inspection by the state officials, the acquisition of plot 153 (on the map) was proven to be not the result of mafia investment but a *familiare* property of the Corso family. The court's reasoning was that, since the plot had been the dowry of the *mafioso's* wife, it should not be confiscated. Furthermore, the *mafioso* had only female children and could pass on to them nothing but the material possessions he had but not, as locals remarked, his 'mafiosity' (*mafiosità*), the social capital of his as a *mafioso*. In this case, the plot of land that Caterina and Serafina still owned in 2009 had been proven to belong to the *mafioso's* family 'independently of his criminal activity'. The land plots they owned were of the *familiare* type because their father proved to the authorities that he had acquired them through his wife's dowry and not due to his illegal practices within the mafia circuit. The daughters had taken over this land after he had been incarcerated. However, the plot that Piero visited at Chiana at the time of my fieldwork was *proprietà propria* (plot 91 on the map), and hence legally liable to mandatory confiscation. After it was confiscated, the Falcone cooperative took over its use (usufruct).

When property is passed on, it influences a variety of social arrangements that take place around a plot. Continuities in moral and/or legal obligations were thus tangibly materialised. Patterns of practices linked to a plot continued despite the legal change in a plot's property status. Hence, genealogical shifts carried along with them (often contrary to the cooperatives' (the new proprietors') will), different nexuses of neighbourly practices. In that respect, the continuity of good neighbourliness and affability between Piero and Serafina was organised around their common past and was 'located' in the bordering of

their plots. The plots here provided a point of reference for the continuation of a relationship that was socially immune to rupture by the confiscation of one of the plots of Serafina's father. It was, as discussed below, a 'line of contact'.

In other cases however, neighbours found that a confiscation challenged behavioural patterns established through longstanding relationships. For example, an old woman acquainted with Brusca was allowed, due to her connivance in his mafia activity, to make use of water from the pond in a Brusca plot. She continued to do so even after the *mafioso* had been arrested and imprisoned, his plot confiscated and handed over to the Falcone cooperative. Once, accidentally meeting Paolo in the streets of San Giovanni, the woman complained that the pond had become unreliable and that she needed 'them' (the people of the cooperative) to make sure the water flow would be more 'to the standards she was used to' (referring to the time when Brusca managed the plot and the pond). Her relationship with Brusca allowed her to think the pattern of getting water could be maintained – and even improved – under the new plot management. However, Paolo thought it prudent to let her know the cooperative felt 'no social obligation' for the continuation of this small favour. It was even suggested, in a brief meeting of the cooperative administrators, that the woman be taken to court for this 'illicit' behaviour.

Piero's cordial relationship with Serafina and Caterina, maintained along the continuing neighbourliness of the plots he worked and theirs, survived the confiscations and continued around a different arrangement. By contrast, the old woman's practice of using the plot's water was discontinued after the confiscation, as the moral basis that legitimated it was her relationship with Brusca and his family, which cooperative members (and the legislation supporting their actions) disavowed. When I discussed the issue with her, she said bitterly that 'unfortunately, now morals have changed'. For her, however, what she herself called 'the moral ownership of the plot' still belonged to the prior owner, her 'neighbour' Brusca.

I use this emic term ‘moral ownership’ to extract, from abstract jural processes and legal statuses, the lived experience of land and the social arrangements around it that were so important for people in Alto Belice. I appropriate the term and use it analytically against the established legal notions of ‘property’. Moving from a focus on the reified (legal) ‘property’ to the less strictly categorised and more dynamic ‘ownership’, I propose that ‘moral ownership’ informed a number of practices of many locals, vis-à-vis specific land plots. Sneath (2002) notes, for post-Soviet Mongolia, the long (not only Soviet) history of a custodial sense of ownership, which survived the demise of socialism. In Alto Belice, moral ownership is a set of values (of neighbourliness and community) that transcends the legal boundaries of property. As Abramson notes of Fijian mythical land (although in Sicily this was not expressed in ritual mediations):

... jural culture and legal boundaries impact within the transforming sphere of the ancestors but neither on or in its own terms. The principal effects of land law have been relayed to a realm outside of the latter’s jurisdiction. (Abramson 2000b: 208)

Continuity with the past is conveyed through some cooperative members (the local workers and daily workers) seeing boundaries as lines of contact with their neighbours, who shared their lingering memory of (non-mafia and mafia) past proprietors of the land. In Alto Belice, local moral discourses on moral *ownership* tackle the jural statuses of legal *property*. In their relations with their long-term neighbours, local workers mobilised the more fluid concept of morals rather than conforming their behaviour to fit the abrupt changes in legal ‘property’ status; thus one could say that they refused to reify jural categories in dealing with the plots’ social arrangements.

Maintaining such practices associated with moral ownership was perceived more strongly than just a choice but, rather, as an obligation binding people to certain behaviours that therefore often continued despite the confiscation of a plot and hence of the shift in property and usage statuses). I soon found out that the meaning of moral ownership was shared by many different people, suggesting the total rupture with the mafia that the

confiscations aimed at was more nuanced than jural processes planned. The morals embodied in the continuation of practices and ideas, which often challenged the confiscations, elucidate the richness of the antimafia cooperativism experience, as people recognising the ‘moral ownership’ of prior proprietors were often local members of the cooperatives, as shown below.

### **6.2.2. Practices recognising ‘moral ownership’ over confiscated plots**

The issue of moral ownership became more tangible to me when Adamo, a key research interlocutor, shared his thoughts about one of the confiscated land plots he worked on, a vineyard that used to belong to the *mafioso* Genovese. He told me that:

I used to be good friends in school with Giovanni Genovese, the *mafioso*'s son. I know the plot, I've worked here before, you know. I've worked for their harvest, some years ago.... And it is for this reason that I am sure that they [the Genovese family] are happy that it is me doing this now, working on their confiscated plot. Me and not somebody else, some guy they would not know; for them it's better if it's me who cultivates their property and not some fellow from another place than San Giovanni .... There is a morality to this, you know. And I recognise this, and respect this feeling.

Adamo was not untypical in having such familiar past relations with *mafiosi* or mafia affiliates. Many local people now working for the cooperatives shared this common experience as they had been involved in informal work through ‘mutual aid’ practices with *mafiosi*. In fact, many cooperative members still met *mafiosi* or people close to them, as I suggested in the previous chapter and shared a degree of respect for the prior proprietors.<sup>160</sup> The sense some people had that *mafiosi* ex-proprietors retained not just the

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<sup>160</sup> Certain analogies can be drawn with ethnographies of post-socialist villages in China (Yan 2003) or the Soviet Union (Humphrey 2002), where locals of bourgeois or kulak origin, although collectivisation deprived them of the land their families used to own, retained a social and cultural capital that inspired mixed feelings of rage in the local peasantry. Under these socialist regimes, the rage was due to then popular Marxist primitive accumulation analyses that saw the rich as having reached their status by violent usurpation and coercion (Lenin: 2004 [1899]). In the Alto Belice case, interestingly similar in that respect with the USSR and Chinese cases, this social background of people considered criminal still could not be entirely undone. However, most locals in Alto Belice did not discredit past proprietors' rights and interests, recognising them as possessing degrees of moral ownership.

property of *familiare* plots but degrees of moral ownership of the *confiscated* plots as well, was also often structurally reinforced through the state's inactivity in imposing the new land statuses. Cooperatives' administrators often told me, that municipalities in Alto Belice, and Sicily at large, committed 'tactical errors' regarding the administration of confiscated land. After confiscation, it was the municipalities' responsibility to manage the smooth bestowal of seized land on a cooperative (the Consortium overlooking the process). This was a source of tension between cooperative administrators and politicians of the area. The authorities tolerated *mafiosi* activities because they recognised degrees of moral ownership in them.

In the case of Lizzi's municipality, the fact that people recognised moral ownership by *mafiosi* eventually led to the Falcone cooperative turning down the opportunity to access a huge piece of dry farming fertile land (100 Ha). The plot was a good distance away from San Giovanni (almost 100 kilometres or a 1.5-hour drive). Legal ownership of the plot had been passed to the municipality after it had been confiscated from a powerful local mafia clan. The mayor of Lizzi, a dynamic young man, suggested Falcone should apply for it. Luca did so and established a short-lease contract for it with the mayor.

The municipality and the mayor personally were, however, 'unable or unwilling' as interlocutors told me, to protect the property from further mafia manipulation: as Luca explained, there were 'people working the plot as if it had never been confiscated'; in that way, the mafia family continued to claim their moral ownership over the land. The mayor did not try (he claimed he was 'too busy') to convince the family of the incarcerated *mafioso* to stop this illicit activity. People in Falcone thought that this was an irresponsible way to manage the confiscated property and that the mayor was ignoring the property's changed status because he recognised degrees of rights to the *mafioso*. In the end, the cooperative decided to drop its claim, as the members thought they could not function without the stability and safety that law and order should guarantee. The state institution seemed unable

to impose the new property order on its citizens. Members of the cooperative felt the state had 'failed' them, as its local agent, the mayor, implicitly recognised the moral ownership of the plot to the mafia, despite the property was of the state.

Analogies can be drawn with Verdery's reflections on the inability 'of the local sphere to be obedient to central directives' (2002: 27); in Alto Belice too there was 'a marked disjuncture between what was legislated at the centre and what happened in rural settings' (2002: 20). In effect, many mayoral policies were in practice far removed from the image of a decisive, law-enforcing state; very often confiscation order were not enforced, due to the reluctance of local-level state agents. An important factor for this unwillingness, as the Lizzi case suggests, is the implicit recognition of a sphere of moral ownership of the prior proprietors, by the state agents themselves.

In other cases, however, the moral ownership prior proprietors sought to claim created circumstances that proved convenient for the cooperatives. The Borsellino cooperative owed the usufruct of a confiscated plot in Castelo; but the *mafioso* and his family continued to work the confiscated plot for months as if nothing had changed. However, the cooperative administrators suddenly changed their stance at the last moment. The land tract was far away from San Giovanni (110 km to the south, more than an hour's drive, on the Agrigento provincial highway). The situation was thus facilitated because the cooperative had limited control over how the property was being used – and by whom – due to the long distance.



**Photo 16:** Harvest at Castelo, August 2009.

In August 2009, I worked on the harvest of that very Borsellino land plot in Castelo. Participant observation with the manual workforce of the cooperative during harvest always yielded important data on the social arrangements around land plots. In this case, it was only after the harvest that I found what Borsellino members had been hiding from me and from the young volunteers who helped out with work on that plot. This was when I found out about the prior owner's uninterrupted cultivation of the vineyard for so long after the confiscation. Informants told me that he probably thought of himself as the moral owner of the plot and therefore continued working on it. This situation continued throughout the agricultural cycle of 2009: the *mafioso*, who had been recently released from prison, and his family, organised the entire year's production. Evidently the *mafiosi* and his family felt they were the 'moral owners' of the plot. Up until two weeks before the harvest, the people of the Borsellino, although they were aware of the situation, did nothing about it. As Pino, a cooperative member-worker told me afterwards:

We did nothing because we feared that if we actually prevented them from doing so they would have felt dishonoured ... As we have no one in the territory of Casteltermini to impose our will, we lose control over it; it is too far from where we are; we could not speculate on what he felt about it, the morals of his family and the local community and stuff.

Working in Castelo, on the second day of harvest, there was a bizarre visit: a man in his forties approached us unexpectedly at the lunch break. He offered wine to the workers and tried to strike up a conversation with some people. Everyone refused the offer of wine – and chatting – with the excuse that ‘we really have to get going with work’. The man disappeared; and Checco, the youngest member of the cooperative, told me months later, ‘No one of us ever saw him again’. People were positive that the man was a relative of the *mafioso* original owner, sent to check on the intentions of cooperative members.

The cooperative’s workers guessed that the *mafioso* felt exploited because suddenly they were harvesting his grapes having tolerated his moral ownership and letting him and his family work the land. Suddenly, at the end of the season they were reaping the produce. The cooperative’s workers lived a long way from the plot but felt that their legal rights protected them; whatever arrangements had been informally allowed to continue, or work put into the vineyard, was irrelevant: he simply had no legal right to harvest the grapes. What may have amounted to a covert recognition of moral ownership had abruptly become an active reappropriation of the plot as their legal property, partly due to administrators’ insistence that the plot *had* to be harvested by the cooperative.

Different people narrated to me that, at the end of August, a man named Grezzo drove all the way from Castelo to San Cipiriddu, in the south part of San Giovanni. He arrived at *Sangiovannaru*, the popular local café where peasants took their early morning coffee before heading to their plots. Strategically positioned at the gates of the village, it was the most convenient place to seek information on just about everything in the area. Grezzo approached the barman and asked where he could find the cooperative’s offices. By pure coincidence, the vice-president of Borsellino, Stefano Dino, a 48-year-old farmer from Rocca, was there at that moment. The barman told Grezzo to speak to Stefano but ‘Dino denied knowing anything about anything’, as the barman himself recounted to me. The vice-president suggested to Grezzo that he should go to the office of the cooperatives



and talk to the 34-year-old president, Silvio. He explained where the office was but when Grezzo went there and asked for the president, he found that Silvio had already left. Stefano had told him what was happening, calling him on his mobile phone, and he had fled the uncomfortable situation.

Comparing the Borsellino and Falcone cooperatives, we can notice that their members acted quite differently. Borsellino members tolerated or ignored technically illicit behaviours, which suggested the ‘moral ownership’ of the prior proprietor, but eventually did harvest the produce of his labour afterwards, due to administrative pressure. In the case of Lizzi, by contrast, the members of Falcone, withdrew from their right to access contested property. Similar complexities regarding property flows from the mafia to the state can be seen in the case of a 10.5 ha plot in Cattí, today managed by the Lavoro e Altro cooperative. That municipality, located far away from Corleone, where the cooperative was based, bestowed the plot on the cooperative in 2004; as Vito explained to me, it was their first grand project with a vineyard. Two years afterwards the municipality was dissolved by the Ministry of the Interior for ‘having been infiltrated by the mafia’. ‘This sad, crazy story left us stunned’, Vito told me. He was positive that a *mafioso* mayor would never enforce the confiscations and allocations legislation.

Such incidents highlight the controversial moralities regarding continuing relationships of people whose land had been confiscated, as well as their disregard for legalistic ideas of *property*, trumped by their moral views over *ownership*. The contradictions of moral ownership reinforce the argument on the multifaceted character of land in San Giovanni, as different subjects contested ownership statuses and competed for the land’s use. The contest between the cooperatives, on the one hand, partially supported by the state and, on the other, the *mafiosi*, supported by their families, neighbours and friends, reveal land’s highly politicised qualities. This is true especially considering that land is imbued with labour valued in different ways as well as with gendered kinship values. In

fact, the different legal statuses of *familiare* or *propria* land were crafted on that basis. There were also contrasting claims to the imposition of law and order: local people contested confiscations and the re-shaping of access to land on the legal and ideological grounds entailed in the antimafia confiscations.

For the cooperative administrators, the state had granted the confiscated land to the cooperatives on the implied condition that they would consolidate legality locally and become the moral gatekeepers of land resources; this condition further suggests the political nature of property. It renders the administration cooperative members reproducers of the gate-keeping (to land) morals of legality. The boundaries of the plots they managed become boundaries of moral universes. However, as suggested by my ethnographic description, while the cooperative members were tied into obligations vis-à-vis the state, some of their ‘uncomfortable’ neighbours still experienced the moral bond they had with their old plot neighbour, friend or kin: often an imprisoned *mafioso*.

In Alto Belice, (legal) property is ‘embedded’<sup>161</sup> (Hahn 1998) in a set of enduring, persistent relationships between old proprietors and people close to them. This ‘closeness’ is both geographical (land plots bordering each other) and ethical (senses of ‘moral ownership’, and senses of ‘lines of contact’, discussed below). This embeddedness, which transcends legalistic approaches to property, is manifested in the ideas of moral ownership. This form of embeddedness of the moral ownership is constructed through family, honour, and neighbourhood. It materialised in behaviours that openly contradicted land confiscations: from guaranteeing water supplies, to simply taking care of a distant plot. In that respect, the political character of property is dynamic. Property might be generally constituted by the state in the legal setting, but people constantly renegotiated this setting,

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<sup>161</sup> Hann’s embeddedness goes back to Polanyi (see Chapter 2); the notion was revived by Granovetter (1985) to argue that markets in capitalist societies are as embedded in social relations (networks) as pre-capitalist ones.

rethinking the fixities of a land plot (Verdery 2003). Such boundary porosities are further explored in the following section. The discussion will highlight how the different practices of cooperatives' people in approaching *mafiosi* over issues arising from confiscated and *familiare* bordering properties, were based on different moral approaches towards contradictory ownership claims.

### **6.3. Contiguities with Uncomfortable Neighbours: 'Moral Borders' vs 'Lines of Contact'**

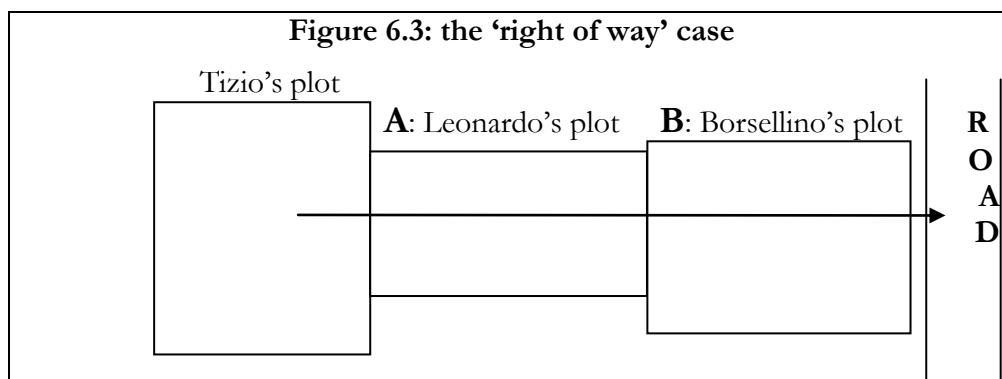
Many people employed by state institutions, ranging from the Consortium to the police, spoke to me about the proximity (*vicinato*<sup>162</sup>) of 'confiscated assets' to plots that were still under a *mafioso* proprietor. The term 'proximity' is not merely about physical space but, rather, a relational concept constructed in social space: it refers to the material realities of bordering plots, across which people came into contact. In fact, here were the confiscated plots, managed by cooperatives, the non-confiscated plots of *familiare* status managed by *mafiosi* and plots that belonged to neighbours, apparently unrelated to the mafia/antimafia distinction. For example, after the *mafioso* Netti was arrested, half of his land was confiscated and integrated into the holdings of the San Cipiriddu municipality. The rest – a vast vineyard bordering directly on the confiscated, now cooperative, land – was been spared, as *familiari*.

The geography of each plot could be given a variety of histories, depending on the context. On one occasion, Piero and I were going for a walk and stopped to buy cigarettes at a *tabbaccheria* owned by Leonardo Brusca, a man who became my main ex-*mafioso* research interlocutor. Leonardo was outside, smoking. Piero greeted him but did not immediately introduce me. They launched into a long and vivid, albeit serious and

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<sup>162</sup> The term can be translated as 'neighbourliness' as well, according to context.

professional, discussion on the subject of property in land, touching on their common problem with Leonardo's neighbour Tizio.



Both Leonardo and Piero knew Tizio, the owner of a plot in the Ginestra area located next a *familiare* plot (plot A on the map above: Figure 6.3) belonging to Giovanni Brusca but managed (as Giovanni was in prison) by Leonardo, his cousin, which in turn lay next to one of the plots of the Borsellino cooperative (plot B), which had been confiscated from Giovanni. Every time they met, Tizio asked Leonardo when the path (indicated on the map by the arrow) crossing both Leonardo's and the Borsellino plots would be finished. The path was his 'right of way'<sup>163</sup> as his access to the road Tizio bore the expenses for the path but, before it could be finished, the confiscation of part of the Brusca land took place in 2005. Tizio had completed the work on the path on the non-confiscated *familiare* plot but the Borsellino cooperative had planted legumes on the confiscated plot they had acquired. Ignoring the changed situation, Tizio went right on extending his right of way across the land of his new neighbours, to the immense irritation of some of the Borsellino members. Leonardo felt responsible for this absurd situation, as it arose from his family's altered circumstances. 'This is a typical neighbourhood issue,' Piero remarked to me later, adding, 'Leonardo simply wants to be reasonable [*vuole ragionare*] about how to deal with the problem of the path'. Piero, who was the main agronomist for the two San Giovanni antimafia cooperatives, viewed these continuities of past and present with a

<sup>163</sup> This is indeed a lawful right, codified in the articles 1051-1055 of the Italian Civil Code (*delle servitù*).

humorous detachment: ‘This is life: things go on, with past issues living on in today’s issues. A confiscation happens, we take the plot, but also take on board all previous obligations attaching to it.’ Piero himself appreciated Leonardo’s will to settle the dispute through dialogue and showing ‘a respectful behaviour’. The administration of the Borsellino cooperative, however, had a more rigid legalistic response and wanted to take their neighbour Tizio to court to settle the matter. Taking such a strong stance, they believed, would consolidate their moral position in the village and defend the ‘integrity’ of their plot.

This vignette illustrates the kind of issues cooperatives often faced in taking on the management of a plot confiscated from a *mafioso*, which not infrequently entailed the contiguities and adjunct responsibilities of bordering a *familiare* plot still in that *mafioso*’s possession. Engaging with the wider social relations of becoming a neighbour in the local realm of properties in land involved complicated activities that the confiscations project had not predicted. The classic point in legal studies that property is a ‘bundle of rights’ (Maine 2008 [1834]) remains true today: in that respect, rightful claims to accessing public spaces, such as right of way giving access to a road, override fixed ideas of possession of land and call for negotiation. The confiscations catered for rights to usufruct, but not other rights included in the ‘bundle’ of property, (such as a right of way), even if the cooperatives had full ownership, would prevail. Here, a legal – and moral – obligation of the *mafioso* expropriator, which a neighbour deemed had been ‘inherited’ by the cooperative members, infuriated cooperative administrators, who felt they should not be held accountable for the choices of other people (especially *mafiosi*) in the past.

In fringe cases and areas of doubt in dealing with ‘a suspect neighbourhood’ (as Domenico, one administrator, called it), the Borsellino administration responded in what they saw as a firm and uncompromised way, sometimes threatening to bring people to justice and often avoiding face to face meetings with their neighbours to discuss conflicts.

Administration members thought that it was impossible to establish any genuine contact with neighbours who were affiliated (*affiliati*) to *mafiosi*: because of affiliations, their actions would always be driven by treachery. Further, they thought that the boundaries between the *familiari* and the confiscated plots needed to be defended. Like borders of a state, the plots' boundaries represented for them a clear mafia/antimafia division which would be figuratively threatened by a path 'connecting' the unconfiscated and confiscated land. My argument here is that administrators' vigorous defence of their plot boundaries is a demarcation of moral borders, seeking to lock the *mafiosi* outside the realm of decent ethical discourse and reason. The administrators' unwillingness to negotiate, and rigid response amounts to a statement that defines a certain 'moral universe', separating discourses between which communication was thought to be possible or improper. For most administrative cooperative members, the *mafiosi* belonged to a different universe of capacity for moral judgment. In defending physical land boundaries, and invoking the authority of law, they were expressing their sense of this utter difference and protecting what they saw as the moral world of the cooperatives. For this reason, the general idea was that court action was the most appropriate solution to all problems regarding people connected to the mafia.

Some Borsellino members in fact stated that dealing with plots boundaries was a strategy of 'defending their borders', while others expressed the view that land boundaries were akin to 'borders of morality and legality', sometimes explicitly asserting that 'the Italian state was represented' by and within the confines of their plots. As Silvio, the president of Borsellino, put it in an interview, there was 'a lot to defend in our boundaries, not just land, but whatever both we and the state stand for, in Alto Belice'.

Not everyone in the locale shared these understandings. Commenting on the cooperatives' predilection for taking issues involving mafia persons to court, a local *mafioso* commented to me: 'Moreover, by making a case for mafia intimidation, they attracted

attention to their cause, the *antimafia*.’ At the same time, many manual workers, such as Fano or Pippo, put it to me that these ideas of ‘the administration’ were out of kilter. As Pippo said, adding ironic emphasis to the word ‘mafia’:

They [the administrators] think we border *The Mafia* [*facciamo confini con A Mafia*], some abstract institution; in fact, our neighbours are actually just people from the village; yes, they are what they are, mafia and all, but they are people like anyone else in the end of the day; they have their morals.

On another occasion, Pippo and Fano complained to me about the ‘rude behaviour’ of the Borsellino administration team towards some local shepherds whose herd foraged in a pasture very close to the lentils field of the Borsellino cooperative. The owners of the herd were the Babbi brothers, well known in Corleone for being ‘affiliated’ to the local mafia clans. The administrators thought that the very fact that they let the herd forage so close to their field was obvious mafia intimidation. Interestingly, cooperative members often described shepherds as ‘close to the mafia ambience’. Marelio, an admin member, indeed told me that ‘I would kill all them shepherds if I could,’ while Adamo, commented, more soberly, that shepherds were ‘always [mafia] affiliated’. Silvio himself told me, ‘These are people that due to ignorance are always close to *mafiosi*, due to their culture’.

This image of the *mafioso pecoraro* (the *mafioso*-shepherd) was commonplace in Sicily,<sup>164</sup> also familiar to cooperative administrators. In the case of shepherds and their sheep, the discourse of proximity to *mafiosi* did not involve a fixed geographical reference, as in the case of a land plot. A herd is mobile; the sheep were brought to the field to forage – although this was never actually proved to be a deliberate action directed by the Babbi neighbours. The shepherds were, rather, suspect neighbours by definition, due to their presumed innate ‘mafiosity’ (*mafiosità*) attributed to ‘their culture’ and their mobile proximity to the Borsellino legume plot: the key thing was that a herd could move at any

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<sup>164</sup> See also Hobsbawm (1963).

time from foraging *right next to* the confiscated plot to foraging *in* it. Hence the claim of intimidation. The shepherds' mobility thus posed a constant renegotiation of the (moral and material) boundaries of the cooperative land plots, and hence the moral borders, of the cooperative, according to administrators. The herd could, at any given moment, enter the plots, oblivious to the legal repercussions applicable to humans, such as the *mafiosi* neighbour land proprietors. The fragile state of this proximity was seen as potentially harmful to the cooperative's safety. When, one day, the herd did cross the line to forage in the plot, a local cooperative member commented to me that 'it was an accident waiting to happen'. Whether the sheep incursion was planned or accidental, the administrators felt that the roaming animals challenged the property status of their plot not only in legal but also in 'moral borders' terms.

Pippo, as well as some Borsellino members from Corleone, thought it would be wise to talk the incident through with the shepherds. They proposed this to the rest of the members, saying that there was no rush to 'speak to the authorities'. 'Making such a fuss about it was unnecessary,' Pippo told me. Piero agreed that 'keeping a relatively low tone' was a strategy of good neighbourliness and 'peaceful coexistence', the politicised term he often jokingly used. Instead, the tactic chosen by the administration was to call the *Carabinieri* immediately, insisting that 'there is no chance we could speak with such people in person', as Luca put it bluntly, when I asked him. The police were called in and 'settled the issue', forcing the Babbi brothers to take their sheep elsewhere: the act was considered 'unauthorised pasturage' (*pascolo abusivo*) and if it ever happened again, it was made clear, the brothers would face court. Local cooperative workers disapproved of this 'aggressive defence of the plots', instead prioritising contact with neighbours, even if *mafiosi*. As with unregistered work (in 5.3), the police's activity supported the Consortium's idea of legality, represented by the administrators.



Most manual member-workers felt some degree of familiarity with *mafiosi* although some saw their mafia neighbours as a constant challenge at the same time. The Falcone cooperative's, Enzo and Paolo, had told me that, they generally felt they found themselves working, as Enzo put it, on the 'front line of combat' (*'al fronte'*). 'We feel those people [the *mafiosi*] around us. ... Anything could happen at five in the morning when I get up in the mist to take the tractor down to the plot and spray the plants.' Paolo agreed but also stressed the gentle manners of the *mafiosi* he met: 'These people are gentle and soft-spoken in how they behave and all but you never know, having them right by all the time.' Speaking with the manual team people's wives, I became aware how they worried their husbands would be 'tricked' by the 'gentlemanly' ways of the *mafiosi*. Santa, Enzo's wife, noted that 'thankfully, with the passing of time, worries have been alleviated a lot; but I still do the sign of the cross as he [Enzo] leaves home in the winter when it's dark'.

Interestingly, different understandings of 'the borderline' reflected the ideas members of the cooperatives' manual production team had, across the cooperatives' two-tiered organisation. Referring to the administration team, workers stressed the dangers they ran themselves: 'The fellows in the office ... they haven't ever taken a risk, they do not know how it is to be here, always right by these people,' Enzo told me as he drove us by tractor to one of the plots. 'The local community does not consider these people [the administrators] as *the cooperative* in the way it considers us to be; we embody the coop, we represent it, because we *live* the plots, we are more visible' (emphasis added). On a different occasion, Adamo told me, 'We, people of the area, have been brought up close to our current neighbours, next door to them'. In this way, their opinion on strategising over

relations with *mafiosi* took this past into account. Manual workforce members called this ‘a civilised *convivere*’.<sup>165</sup>

Hence the frustrated response when Borsellino administrators shouted down other voices (such as Marcuso, a worker from Curriuni), when he recommended not immediately referring an issue to the authorities. Pippo, in response, left the cooperative, disillusioned. Such discounting of local members’ views he described as a matter of cultural divergence with Silvio (Borsellino’s president) – a nuisance in working for the cooperative.

Therefore, the division of the cooperatives in an office-based and a land-based team was reflected in people’s attitudes to their neighbours. On the one hand, administrators exhibited confrontational behaviour in tackling persons close to mafia interests, threatening law enforcement. On the other, the manual workers had a more tolerant approach to negotiating contiguities with such people. They were enmeshed in everyday flows of relations that made them loath to impose stark decisions on complaining neighbours. They thought it was in the interest of their cooperatives to maintain viable relations of tolerance with farmers in the *vicinato* (proximities, neighbourhood), as these were often the very people related or affiliated to the *mafioso* whose confiscated plots the cooperatives currently managed.

In other cases, turbulent moments with *mafioso* neighbours were resolved less confrontationally through face to face meetings. It came to be accepted not only that such a neighbour had a right to ask for a discussion *in quattro occhi, come signori* (face to face)<sup>166</sup> but

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<sup>165</sup> *Convivere* in this context means ‘living together’ with *mafiosi*. I was first told this by the Carabinieri marshal from San Giovanni, regarding the relation between local mafia and the antimafia cooperatives: ‘They need to learn to live together’ (*bisogna imparare a convivere*). He argued that the proximity to *mafiosi* was an indication of how innocuous ‘the antimafia’ was: ‘The cooperatives don’t mean anything to the *mafiosi*; they don’t bother them.’ The simple fact that they are working right next to Genovese and Netti, and those people offer them water, for instance, means a lot – and it certainly also means *that for the mafiosi they just don’t count*. [emphasis mine]

<sup>166</sup> Literally: in four eyes, ‘as gentlemen do’. Classic ethnographies of Mediterranean settings, including Italy, stress the ‘directness’ of ‘face-to-face’ conduct and how much it is related to ideas of manliness and honour (for Italy: Davis 1977; Silverman 1975; for Greece: Herzfeld 1985).

also that he could be law-abiding and that his immediate claims might be sound. People like Piero often de-essentialised *mafiosi* in these ways, for example, respecting the documentation that they used to support their legal claims, rather than immediately suspecting them. He fiercely criticised the ‘zero tolerance’ stance of his colleagues, which he found not only ‘neither polite, nor fair’ but also counterproductive:

Because of their lack of experience, the Borsellino people don’t know how to work these things out ... We really have to show that we do not fear contact, as opposed to just expressing distress, which is what they do. ... They have to see what the ex-proprietor wants, when he approaches them, right there, at the plot. ... You have to see what they want; it is a matter of being civilised and also of good neighbourliness. You have to listen to them for a bit, basically.

It was for these reasons that cooperative members like Piero considered plot boundaries as lines of contact rather than moral borders, as their colleagues from the administrative team saw them.

Another narrative will further illustrate this argument. From March 2010 onwards, Centopassi was the Falcone cooperative’s winery, bottling under the Falcone label. It was surrounded by vineyards of autochthonous grape types, Catarratto and Grillo. In 2007, the winery building had been confiscated from Genovese, the San Giovanni mafia clan leader from 1997 until his arrest in April 2007 (he had taken over local mafia power after the downfall of the Bruscas). A vineyard confiscated from Genovese lay to the right of the winery, covering a hilly area of 5 Ha. Genovese, the ex-proprietor, was a renowned farmer, like many of the village *mafiosi*<sup>167</sup>. Genovese had invested in buying land, in order (according to some) to facilitate money laundering. Discussing Genovese’s local *cummannari* (loosely translated as ‘rule’), people I spoke with narrated clear memories of his presence in the village: he was recognised as a high-ranking *mafioso*. The case of the Genovese family is significant, in that the father was the last ‘top’ *mafioso* arrested in San Giovanni. Some of his

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<sup>167</sup> Although the Brusca mafia clan had been, historically, more involved with animal husbandry than with agriculture.

plots were now confiscated and managed by the Falcone cooperative and some still belonged to his family (i.e. they were *familiari*).

Some cooperative members had vivid memories of work relations structured through patronage dependencies on the Genovese family. Even currently, there were continuities with that recent past in ‘mutual aid’ relations that cooperative members, outside their coop work, still maintained with the Genovese family, through their many *familiari* plots. Many of these Genovese *familiari* plots, in turn, border on plots confiscated from them and now managed by the cooperatives.

Right next to a piece of confiscated land now used by the Falcone cooperative, and also lying beside the Centopassi winery, was a Genovese *familiare* land tract that had not been confiscated because it was a family inheritance. Early one April morning, Enzo and Piero were working in just this part of the Falcone vineyard, with the Genovese *familiare* plot just a few yards away from them. Suddenly, Enzo’s cell phone rang: the number on the screen and the voice were unfamiliar. It turned out to be Giovanni Genovese’s 40-year-old son Mimmo, just out of prison, complaining, in the Sicilian dialect, that there was a problem with plot boundaries: he was asking to meet someone from Falcone to discuss it. To this day, no one in the cooperative knows how Genovese junior had found Enzo’s number. The incident caused distress amongst the Falcone administrators. Luca, and the vice-president, Mina, were particularly upset. They were absolutely against the possibility of a meeting with people they considered ‘were unable to reason with’. They insisted that the cooperative should call in the police as soon as possible; even if there was to be a meeting to discuss property boundaries, they wanted the Carabinieri to be present. ‘Our boundaries are not to be negotiated at a *mafioso*’s phone-call,’ Luca asserted to me: ‘They are not *just* plot boundaries and these land tracts are not *just* plots; there’s more to them.’ However, after they saw that the manual workforce team was adamant in insisting there should be a meeting with the *mafioso* neighbour on this issue, Luca and Mina yielded to the workers’

demands. ‘They realised we could handle the issue, as they trusted our experience’, as Enzo told me.<sup>168</sup>

The meeting was therefore arranged between ‘any’ member of the cooperative and Genovese for the next morning, in the early hours – a detail that caused even more tension. Meeting Mimmo was a curious moment for Piero, as he had never met a San Giovanni *mafioso* before in such circumstances. The meeting went well: ‘He is a well mannered gentleman. ... His ways were noble and kind and he was very gentle and careful with us,’ Enzo reported. In addition, Piero noted that the *mafioso* ‘was prudent enough to speak more in Sicilian with Enzo and in Italian with me, as my Sicilian is not sound’.

Genovese’s ‘noble and kind ways’, as well as Dammusi, that plot which locals considered particularly beautiful, bore a particular cultural significance for people whose livelihoods had been connected to a land that was now fragmented across confiscated and *familiari* plots. The remembrance of the ‘past continuous unity of these plots’, as Nicola suggested, was juxtaposed to the current experience of working in a now fragmented domain where the historical connections of land had been broken up and reconfigured. For those cooperative members who, like Nicola, remembered working in past harvests for the old *mafiosi* owners on these same plots, this sense of a lost past was intensified. The remembrance of the unity of the land plots reinforced local workers’ sense of the confiscated plots’ boundaries being less rigid in practice than imagined in the map of the Cadaster and in legal discourse, and constructed their sense of moral ownership.

The stratification of different plots is of particular importance when considering the moral connotations attached to the division of land into *familiari* (non-confiscated) and *propria* (confiscated) plots, and their associated ethical connotations. In the case of

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<sup>168</sup> In this instance we see a continuum between the administrators’ idea of moral borders and their practice of virtuous networking (4.2). Both can be seen as manifestations of their tendency towards separation from the locality; in Chapter 7, this is traced further.

contiguities with Genovese's plots above (confiscated and *familiari*), the boundaries issue did not signify legal rigidities; rather, it marked land plot boundaries as lines of contact. Opting for a non-conflictual and 'civilised manner' (in the words of Enzo), the cooperative members saw the heir of the *mafioso* under a different perspective after this incident. It is through such communications that people of the manual workforce team experienced the boundaries of the confiscated plots as lines of contact rather than as moral borders. This continuity indicates how some of the cooperatives' people contacted *mafiosi* through the boundaries of their land plots. As Enzo said, land plot proximity was an 'issue made of people, not just borders'.

Enzo and Piero meeting Mimmo was part of the lived experience of contacting the actual people who used to own the plots their cooperatives cultivated. This is especially true after they realised that (ironically?) Genovese *did* have a rightful claim over the disputed piece of land between the two properties, as he proved to them, providing the exact legal documents at the meeting. The members checked them and admitted, surprised, that the *mafioso* was legally right, and they had, albeit by accident, extended their plot's boundaries, and trespassed on his *familiare* property.

In the cases above, I have ethnographically discussed the fluid nature of property in Alto Belice, paying particular attention to the discrepancies caused to local social relations because of the confiscations of certain plots and the non-confiscation of others. What I identify as a tension here is the interplay between an enforcing *system of value* (property) and a *set of local values* (ideas about ownership). In Chapter 4, I suggested analogies between the spheres of circulation (Bohannan 1959; Bohannan and Dalton 1962) and the spheres of relatedness constructed among members of the same group in the cooperatives, and distinct between the two groups. Different idioms characterise the two groups' spheres of relatedness, as members of each group drew from different values, informed by class and locality.

Here, the tension in approaching land is between property, codified in a (legal) system of values, and a different set of values, foreclosed in (moral) practices around moral ownership. This differentiation mirrors the cooperatives' division of labour and the different values privileged by each group of members. Once again, the ethnographic evidence points to differentiated concepts of moral economy between the two groups. When the state model of antimafia *cooperativism's* moral economy entails specific values associated with the state's protection of the confiscated land, the actual experience of being in an antimafia *cooperative*, as suggested by workers, point to a different understanding of (moral) ownership, related to (and informed by) local values. The locals' experience of antimafia cooperatives, allows for moral ways to perceive landownership and neighbourliness; but also, the state model of antimafia cooperativism pursued by administrators (corresponding to a jural conceptualisation of land), moralises property itself. The moral economies of the two groups were arranged on the basis of different conceptualisations of land, premised accordingly on legislated property and moral ownership.

The political aspect of land was palpable in people's contested and contesting ideas about it, which utilised a rhetoric of war. The terms cooperative members (both administrators and manual workers) used, such as 'peaceful coexistence', 'boundaries', 'borderlines' and 'diplomacy' constitute a range of metaphors shared among all people in the cooperatives, which implies that the process of cultivating the confiscated land was akin to experiencing a war frontline. However, in this process, there were important differentiations among people, arranged across the cooperatives' division of labour. The most important was that, largely, the administrators thought of the plot boundaries as borders for their moral universes, while manual workers did not disown the possibility of contact with *mafiosi* and indeed recognised them, to certain degrees, as valid and potentially moral people, in terms of their argumentation, morals and overall personhood. This was

rooted in locals' common experiences with many *mafiosi* before the confiscations: their tolerance of *mafiosi* was continuous with these experiences of *convivere*, informal work and past patronage.

I have approached spaces of social interaction of the members and workers of the cooperatives with the geographical and productive environment in which they are integrated. Looking closely at the lived environment of the land plots, I discussed a series of stories of contacts between the people of the cooperatives and people who owned land plots bordering them. In most cases, this was done due to people owning a nearby plot; in others, because the plots the cooperatives cultivated used to belong to proprietors deemed *mafiosi* by the law, who still felt they were related to that land. The moral ownership often passed from imagination to the level of material practice.

In this section, I have discussed a number of continuities of transferable bundles of rights, which challenged the 'thinginess' of property (Hann 1998: 8), which the cooperative administrators and the state argued about, highlighting the relational and fluid, 'elastic' aspects of property (Verdery 2003). In other words, the transfer of usufruct rights in the post-confiscation era was not the static outcome of a historical moment. Rather, it was constantly contested, debated and negotiated, allowing space for broader ethical considerations and moral demarcations. In the cases of the old lady taking water or unauthorised sheep foraging, we witness neighbours' patterns of behaviour that are inherited, often related to bonds and/or trust relations these people maintained with *mafiosi*. These relations were tied to what cooperative local people defended as the continuation of past ways of doing things in the face of the changes imposed by the Consortium and the state's legal categories. People experienced this change as a rupture that fragmented the geography of the locale in which mafia land was embedded'— so central to the collective memory in Alto Belice- into confiscated and *familiari* plots.



Social relations endured and, in fact, were reproduced throughout this patchwork of differently adjusted pieces of land. In the case of Tizio and his right of way, such relations also entailed legal obligations to neighbours ‘inherited’ from past proprietors (*mafiosi*) by the cooperatives. In the above cases, nevertheless, there was a shared sense that plot boundaries were important affirmations of moral behaviour and of local codes of conduct. Land boundaries represent more than the materialisations of a legal scheme: they affirmed the jural process of the confiscations in ways that meant different things to different people. The land boundaries become signifiers of contact with locals and with *mafiosi*, reflecting the internal division of labour of the (supposedly horizontal) cooperatives. Namely, for manual workers, the land plot boundaries signified lines of contact, while administrators defended a moral universe contained in the boundaries of their cooperatives’ plots.



While it is difficult to depict the neighbourliness between confiscated land plots and *familiari* still in the possession of their original proprietors, these photographs can do more justice to the argument. These two buildings, sharing the same courtyard, were part of a *masseria*, a farmhouse that belonged to the Bruscas.

**Photo 17:** The building here was deemed *familiare* and thus not confiscated but the owner, Antonia Brusca, left it in a state of abandonment. Attached, on the right, there is another building whose façade figures prominently in Photo 18.

**Photo 18:** This building formed part of the confiscated property. Allocated to the Falcone cooperative, it was renovated with EU monies (PON-5 security funds) and turned into an *agriturismo*.

#### 6.4. Problematizing the Relationships Elicited by Categories of Property (*Familiare* and *Propria*)

The uncomfortable proximities generated by the state bestowing confiscated land on cooperatives underlines the relationality of property in Alto Belice. Where the confiscation regime sought to fix property along clearly demarcated lines, this was continuously rearranged and renegotiated, as people contested these settings. Thick ethnographic description makes it possible to disentangle the use of terms in official jargon from their different use as in grounded experience, as with the term ‘boundaries’ here. Many local cooperative members thought that, instead of dividing, flows through boundaries actually

brought people together as bearers of tangible rights. They did not feel they contacted people over land boundaries in their capacity as mere representatives of the abstract category 'antimafia'. Despite property rights derive from notions of individualism, in Alto Belice, people experienced contested boundaries as fulcrums of social relations. For some people they were porous, open for contacts; for others, they delineated the framework of their moral universe. In the case of the confiscated plots, property is by definition a fluid concept: legal property was retained by the state, allowed to the 'community', bestowed to the cooperatives, used by the cooperatives members, and often reclaimed by the *mafiosi*, while neighbours recognised degrees of moral ownership to the *mafiosi* and their reclaiming of the land.

One inspiration for the anthropological discussion on property in land here is John Davis' comment on land disputes in Italy: 'You cannot sue an acre: a boundary dispute is not a dispute with land but with people' (1973: 157) – and insight unwittingly echoed by my research participant Enzo (quoted earlier): 'Plot boundaries are an issue made of people, not just borders; they are what people make of them.' Anthropologists, accordingly, have stressed the 'social relationships' or 'arrangements' around land ownership. The emphasis on property as a nexus of social relations, thus diverting analysis away from its apparent 'thinginess' (Hann 1998: 8), was taken up by a series of contributions drawn on here (see for example Beckman and Beckman 1999; Hann and Hart 2009; Hann 2009). It follows that state assumptions about local kinship relations (family/clan) produce material realities on the ground, which, as I have shown, can destabilise state planning. As state assumptions on kinship (drawn on abstract ideas of local community) produce unintended consequences, they reinforce dissimilarities between local values (corresponding to ownership) and a legislated system of value (corresponding to property).

As discussed (in 2.2), the terminology of 'clan' or 'family', used as an ideological premise to classify land as *propria* or *familiare* (and therefore confiscatable or not), suggests

that the antimafia confiscation law and associated state planning is informed by specific conceptualisations of kinship. As stated, I take legislative activity to be a process that thus stretches across a continuum from the inception of a law to its imposition (Mundy and Pottage 2004; Moore 2005). This is particularly true of the fabrication of land categories where the imposition of law involves ‘messy’ interactions between morals, politics and jural processes on the ground (Abramson 2000a; Mundy 2007).

Understanding the correlation of continuity and transformation here requires recognising that the state’s legislative process is itself not monolithic but plural. It incorporates a variety of claims, reified in diverse land statuses, and is informed by local ideas on kinship. The work of Jack Goody is helpful to approach how the reproduction of the clan is charged with particularly negative meanings, in the context of these legal categories. Goody’s historical approach underlines how the state formation in Europe drew on appropriating power over land (territorial) ownership through controlling inheritance practices (1976; 1983; 2000). I have already mentioned, in the previous chapter, how the emic term ‘clan’ was equally used by locals in Alto Belice, the Italian state bureaucrats of Palermo and Rome and antimafia press such as the “*S*” magazine. The term is evocative of the historical term ‘clan’, which Goody employs to describe a male fraternity exercising constant claims over territory.<sup>169</sup> In Goody, clan relates to political power, which in the case of mafia resonates with the state’s will to reign over territory. Tillion’s work on the manipulation of gendered inheritance practices offers insights on how male power was

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<sup>169</sup> Specific passages from Marx’s analysis on primitive accumulation on the acquisition of the lands of the Scottish clans by the state of England are also enlightening. Marx shows how state violence was directed against a lineage society’s claims to territory arranged in male-brotherhood alliances. English lords acquired the vast lands of the Scottish clans, and hunted them with fierceness, attacking the social organisation of the Highland communities by violently disrupting their claims to territory, which allowed for their reproduction as communities and for the reproduction of the clan system itself (Capital, vol 1: Chapter 27; 2008: 366-372).

Marxist-inspired anthropologists have looked at land through a ‘lineage mode of production’ approach (Chauveau and Richards 2008). I am cautious as to how African ethnographies can be used in the Mediterranean context, to enrich the historical approach of Goody (1983). An ‘evolutionist’ comparative approach should be avoided. In any case, claims over land have, in the ‘socialist’ Tanzanian context for example, caused tensions among local clans and the state’s novel cosmologies of ‘fair redistribution’ (Caplan 1975).

maintained in the face of bilateral inheritance regulations, in North Africa's 'republics of cousins' (1983).

In Alto Belice, the legislation process produces a legal reification of land in property, counterpoising 'family' to 'clan'. These kinship terms correspond to *familiare* and *propria* property. As discussed earlier, those plots deemed *familiari* included genealogically transmitted land tracts. They were often originally acquired as the dowry of a woman marrying a *mafioso* or simply as lawful acquisitions of the *mafioso* himself through his lawful activities – 'moral labour' – outside his capacity and activity as a *mafioso*. Transmission in these cases was seen as morally sound, in that it reproduced the continuity of a family, via means acquired through processes valued by the state (motherhood, marriage, decent labour). The plural (not, as the Consortium implies, unilinear) jural (and moral) process of mapping land plots in Alto Belice suggests a process of broader local social reproduction (Narotzky 1997). So, the state's legal systematisation of value (in making, for instance, the jural category (confiscated or *familiare*) 'property') is partly composed of local values itself; I argue therefore, that the distinction, between jural value, reified in property, and a moral set of values expressed in local practices around ownership, is more nuanced than it originally appears. The system of values that supports property derives from the state's politics of antimafia interventionism but also incorporates local ideas of kinship. The set of local ideas expressed in moral ownership reflect a community imbued in the locality, with people's memories and morals present.

A *familiare* plot incorporates kinship values and a kind of work seen as positive reproduction, compatible with values that the state promotes. Instead, when the asset of a *mafioso* is seen as property owned by him in his capacity as a member of a mafia clan, the asset is thought to contribute to the clan's reproduction. In that respect, confiscations act as interventions from a regulatory authority that dismantle clan continuities, as in the intergenerational reproduction of a clan's control over land, and hence over 'territory'.

‘Control of territory’ (*controllo di territorio*<sup>170</sup>) is an emic term describing mafia clan power over land ownership. Unlike the reproduction of a family, which is tolerated by the state, the reproduction of a clan is not. It is deemed, therefore, that the unit of the mafia is the clan, and not the family (but see the ‘familialist’ discourse in: Dino 1997; Fiandaca 2007, often echoing ideas of ‘amoral familism’).

Here, I once more take on board Carsten’s idea on how kinship interacts with the law (2000). In Italy, the law and various categories of relatedness are constantly mutually constituted, producing what I called ‘uncomfortable’ realities on the ground. The social arrangements around property develop in political ways, as people contest settings born of state policies which, incorporating contradictory local terms of relatedness, ‘reproduce and reinforce the irresolvable procedural and substantive complexity in land conflicts’, as Holston notes for Brazilian legal categories (1991: 702; see also Clemmer 2009). This complexity in the Sicilian context is brought about by the legal categories *familiare* and *confiscato*, which reflect a contested categorical distinction between the kinship terms clan and family and the different values the state ascribes to them. The jural codification/translation of the kinship term clan, linked to mafia, is associated with jural activities, the confiscations. The intention of the state to reconcile claims to land of genealogical value (family) and its own counterclaim to territorial control over the mafia, through confiscations, have yielded contradictory everyday realities in Sicily. These are manifested on the ground in the uncomfortable contiguities of *familiare* and confiscated plots and in moral ownership ideas. In that respect, behind the apparent neutrality of legislation lays political choice, in which kinship (family, clan) is a fundamental parameter. This is evident as specific treatment is reserved for *mafiosi* clans’ land and other for their families’ land. Only a few people can enjoy access to this newly available land, which

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<sup>170</sup> This emic notion in Sicily signifies the presumed ‘control’ *mafiosi*’s presence exercised in their surroundings, often translated in their being established as patrons of the local agrarian labour market.

Consortium officials claim has now ‘returned to the community’. Following Verdery’s work on the post-socialist ‘elasticity’ and ‘porosity’ of land in Romania (2003), I have moreover shown how the porous boundaries between land plots formed, for some, boundaries between moral universes and for others, lines of contact.

Therefore, I argue that land in San Giovanni is a palimpsest: overlapping values build onto each other, and past owners’ claims to land (as well as their friends’ and neighbours’ enduring rapports with their old plots) persist into the post-confiscation period, in an interaction of legislated *value* with local *values*. The appropriation, by the jural codification of the state, of local ‘mythical’ categories of kinship to enact the confiscations policy is a form of continuity within change. Property legislation pays attention to local categories, which leads to unintended consequences. The political economy of the confiscations does take into account some local categories, in order to compose legal ones. However, this interaction of community and economy exposes cooperative members to *mafiosi*. The creation of the moral ownership category allows for continuities of local practices, whose arrangements were often assisted by law itself, e.g. rights in rem. As past relationships are maintained and constantly renegotiated through the pores however, boundaries become lines of contact for some people (namely local workers), while for others (the administrators), who interpret the legislative process in strict terms, they became moral borders. Abramson acutely notes that

... the relation of identity is linked to mythical contexts of continuity, in which the past is inevitably embedded in the land as an inviolable substance. The property relation, by contrast, is linked to the jural context, under whose jurisdiction the strength of each unit of property, no matter what its history, rests upon the legitimacy of contemporary mediations, rather than the authority of the past. (Abramson 2000a: 8)

The interaction of the jural (a codified system of value, that does, however, recognise degrees of kinship) and the local (a set of values) has been the pivotal point of

this chapter. The jural context, embraced by administrators, calls for law enforcement and is akin to their dominant model of antimafia cooperativism, informed by the Consortium's idea that community and state are conflated terms. The 'mythical' context, endorsed by workers, deploys different, moral ideas on land and allows for a more dynamic experience of being in an antimafia cooperative, one intoned with the locals' obligations and wider relations with their material, experienced community. Their idea of community is detached from legalistic conceptualisations and the state's language of reification, so palpably manifested in the notion of 'property'. With this in mind, I move on to some conclusive insights.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have explored the tensions between (moral) ownership and (legal) property of land in Alto Belice, and the divergent moral stances taken by cooperatives members towards their plot boundaries and their neighbours. Administrators promoted change and seclusion, which reinforced the many locals' tendency to follow the continuities of their neighbours' practices, morals and codes, which they shared, such as 'moral ownership'. The chapter has highlighted the interactions – and resultant tensions – between the value system codified in terms of legal property categories and locally orchestrated values, formed around moral ownership. I have argued that the way the jural categories of land as property shaped (*familiare/propria*) land pushed people of the cooperatives into complex relations with a range of actors: local authorities, *mafiosi-ex-land* proprietors, and land plot neighbours. These people held conflicting ideas about where the limits of their activity lay. The distinction between a (state) single system of value/and (local) values is more nuanced than it appears in counterpoising legislation to local practices; notably, the state recognises kinship values (family/clan), in the constitution of its values, codified in law. However, property's overarching value system, enacted by and enforced through



legislation, is composed on the ground by values situated in people's views of land and neighbourliness and manifested in local practices.

Different people experience land plots as points of division and/or contact. Cooperative actors see the boundaries between two land plots of different legal status (confiscated and non-confiscated) as demarcators of distinct moralities. For administrators the plots seem to inhabit different 'moral universes'. However, the plots' social arrangements prove messy and blurry on the ground; I argue that the intricacies experienced are embedded in the law's reified categories: *familiare* and *propria*. Because these categories are formulated along a conceptual separation between two kinship categories representing different values (family and clan), they create, on the one hand, confiscated and on the other non-confiscated plots. In this way, the 'uncomfortable' neighbouring arrangements produced, comprise continuities and contiguities. Holston's work discusses the misrule and ruptures that the application of legislation provoked in Brazilian land reforms (1991), where contradictory land legislation led to illegalities and uncomfortable contestations (2008). In Sicily, the tensions among the legislated and the perceived rights to claim land confirm this discussion.

Although the confiscations brought rupture, continuities persisted, materialised in contiguities of land plots, in inherited rights, in continuations of locally situated activities, not so much *in the face of* the radical legislation's rupture, as indeed *because of* that rupture. This is in line with a series of anthropologists' arguments on state policy's grounded arrangements, including Scott's argument that projected top-down change has unintended consequences on the ground (1998), Verdery's point that legislation at administrative centres is removed from the law's local manifestations (2002; 2003) and Creed's 'conflicting complementarity' between state strategies and local experiences (1998). I have looked at neighbourhood practices continuous with the pre-confiscation period, and cooperative administrators' seeing property boundaries as moral borders marking moral universes. I

shall expand on this argument in the next chapter, focusing on the administrators' discursive categories of separation, which again formed moral borders around the cooperatives' activity.

In sum, as the jural process is removed from the grounded experience of land management in Alto Belice, it produces often uncomfortable realities, which implied that the transformation of the local political economy could not be conveyed *only* through the radical policy of the confiscations. Specifically, as the legislation caters for mafia 'familial' property in ways different from 'clan' property, it produced two surprising consequences: firstly, continuations in local practices of neighbours and *mafiosi* around the plots; secondly, unintended social relationships of neighbourhood as some of the *familiari* and confiscated land plots bordered each other.

In that way, the legislative process and the state's activity ironically brought people involved in the antimafia cooperatives and *mafiosi* or mafia-affiliated people closer than they ever were. While the confiscations project aimed at a local 'separation' of mafia from antimafia, marginalising the *mafiosi*, it has actually positioned them close to cooperative members, therefore unintentionally encouraging relationships with them. Thus, the change confiscations brought about, produced continuities in practices and contiguities among plots, which formulated social interactions that the state's planning aimed to avoid. In the next chapter, I move from exploring the boundaries of mafia and antimafia in land to exploring them in discursive, reputational networks.

# Chapter 7

## The Use of Gossip: Blurring and Setting Boundaries around the Cooperatives

### Introduction

In the previous chapter, I showed how administrators supplemented the legally delineated boundaries of confiscated plots by construing them as moral borders. I now apply this idea of moral borders to explore the administrators' social activity in San Giovanni and the contacts they negotiated during the time they spent outside the cooperatives' offices with people who wanted to collaborate with the cooperatives. These activities will be analysed here in terms of border crossing and border marking. The narrative illustrates how administrators shielded the cooperatives from certain local influences, elucidating how they traced who was a *mafioso* in the village and negotiated such information, shaping their own and their cooperatives' self-image as against the San Giovanni mafia. I argue that, their attempts to reinforce antimafia change suggest interesting continuities with local codes, as they appropriated gossip,<sup>171</sup> a practice continuous with local 'cultural codes' (*sensu* Schneider and Schneider 1976), to seclude the cooperatives from malign ('unclean') influences.

In Chapter 2 (2.1) I discussed a problem identified in the literature: continuity with, and interactions between, the histories of mafia and antimafia. In this chapter, I decipher how administrators sought to deal with this historical entanglement of mafia and antimafia, by using gossip to constitute mafia and antimafia as *separate* categories. At the same time, I show how local codes of gossip were used by other people, not involved in the coops, to

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<sup>171</sup> In describing and analysing gossip, the core of my ethnographic attention is verbal communication – taking gossip *stricto sensu*, as speech about speech. However, throughout the chapter, I also refer to non-verbal communication that accompanied verbal gossip as these discursive means are part of the broader framework of indirect communication, in which cooperative members are locally entrenched.

*blur* mafia/antimafia distinctions. I explore the question of how people in public spaces speak to each other and about each other in San Giovanni, and what kinds of idioms brought these people together or kept them apart. In what ways did cooperative administrators come closer to the locals' lived experience and thus reinforce the cooperatives' horizontal (egalitarian) ideology? In this chapter, I discuss the issue of the possible effects of local gossip on the cooperatives' presumed horizontality; in other words, did gossip integrate the cooperatives' economic endeavour with the community or did it have the effect of separating cooperative members from it?

Some works identify rumour as more public, while gossip is generated in face-to-face contact; however, the two often overlap<sup>172</sup>. Gossip is seen as the exchange of information between different actors, i.e. more of a feature of specific social relationship, rather than the broader circulation of rumours. It has been pointed out that, unlike rumours at large, gossip is the expression of group-belonging (Gluckman 1963), while also being associated with social stigma (Saada 1980; Stewart and Strathern 2004). I shall be using the term 'gossip', rather than 'informal information' or rumours, precisely because gossip connotes more than a description of events (however precise), and instead points to the acquisition and/or negotiation of specific resources, including material resources such as money (see 7.1.2) and social capital, especially reputation (Stewart and Strathern 2004: 168). Following Schneider and Schneider's notion of 'reputational networks' (1996: 9), I show how, depending on the person negotiating the exchange, reputation through gossip may be used to blur or to set boundaries. Gossip is therefore not directionless and general, like rumours, but a resourceful activity of passing informal information, which often,

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<sup>172</sup> The gendered element is prominent in analyses of indirect communication and rumours (Hendry and Watson 2001). In Southern European ethnography it has been connected with women's domestic and inter-domestic contact (Reiter 1975), while the entirely male-centred *bar* becomes the locus of sociability, dominated by codes of male friendship (especially analyses on 'male commensality' by Papataxiarchis 1991, 1992, 1999; Desai and Killick 2010; but also Pina-Cabral 1989; Almeida 1996).

informally, has consequences for the lives of those involved, as well as for the individuals or groups they may target. The ethnographic focus of this chapter is local gossip and its uses; gossip about who was a *mafioso* and what it meant to be one and, especially, about who maintained contacts with such people, and what might be the implications of such conduct in San Giovanni.

Indeed, the police tracked gossip in their investigations and affiliation (of someone to mafia) was akin to a legal category. The first part of the chapter explores the modes in which gossip among locals blurred boundaries between mafia and antimafia. The second part focuses on how administrators (as well as the police) used gossip to demarcate these boundaries. This dimension further frames the problem of horizontal relations in the cooperatives, offering insights into moralities and practices. Gossip impacted on the equity relations among members of the cooperatives, as well as on the relationship between cooperative members and the local community. The narrative in the chapter serves two aims. The first is descriptive: I aim to elucidate the role of administrators in the local community, highlighting instances where they or their allies (like the barman Viriglia) were exposed to local rumours, as well as moments when they instrumentalised these rumours to demarcate a separation between the blurred categories of mafia/antimafia on the ground. The second is analytical: I suggest that the administrators' plan to shield the cooperatives off from local influence takes also discursive forms. Their commitment to virtuous networking and their idea that land boundaries were moral borders is here reproduced in their appropriation of local gossip. Focusing on contamination, they deploy information for purposes of surveillance of other cooperative members. This attempt to set moral borders *around* the cooperatives was informed by their own status as outsiders to San Giovanni's social life and reflected their lack of kinship ties to the area and their suspicion of locals' antimafia commitment.

I suggest that gossip is of fundamental importance in the ways people experienced their involvement in the antimafia cooperatives. It became an antimafia resource *because* administrators used it to create boundaries, while locally, as a cultural code, it in fact blurred the boundaries between mafia and antimafia. The ethnography shows that locals used it in different ways, often for instance to prove their antimafia credits, or to cross the ‘moral borders’ between mafia and antimafia through it. Following Schneider and Schneider’s notion of ‘reputational networks’ (1996: 9), I show how, depending on the person negotiating it, reputation through gossip, may be used to blur or to set boundaries.

## **7.1. Flows of Rumours about Mafia and Antimafia in San Giovanni**

### **7.1.1. Learning boundaries: administrators in San Giovanni cafés**

Claudia, a 30 year old administrator for the Falcone, could not imagine that men visiting the newsagents around the corner from the Rex, a local *bar*,<sup>173</sup> entertained mafia sympathies. She was unaware of the kin relations among Rex regulars and the co-owner of the newsagents (a man called Salvatore, who had spent three years in prison for ‘mafia allegiance’). Once, as we both entered Salvatore’s newsagents to buy cigarettes, Claudia inquired whether they sold ‘antimafia periodicals’. Receiving no answer, she flipped through the magazines and fished out the only available copy of the ‘*S*’, an antimafia-committed investigative journal. Salvatore’s brother-in-law, who sat behind the counter, gave us a cold, hard look as he handed her the change. Claudia did not sense his antipathy. Some weeks after, when I got to know him better, he explained that, he recognised in me ‘a

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<sup>173</sup> A *bar* in Italy, unlike the Anglo Saxon use of the term, is a coffee-house, where espresso is served to be consumed usually standing; sweets and pastry are also on sale; a few tables, with a couple of newspapers will be available. Most of the clientele would spend just a few minutes in a *bar*, the time it takes to consume a coffee shot, while others, locals to specific *bars*, would hang out there for hours, especially in bars which had a gaming room at the back, from which elder men would come and go holding cards in their hands. (Here, when referring to more than one *bar*, I use the term ‘bars’ in order to avoid confusion (in Italian, the plural is *bar*).

male who lived in the village and was hence able to understand' his look of contempt for my companion.

A few days after my visit to the newsagent with Claudia, I was spending a sunny afternoon coffee break at the Rex with some of the members of the Falcone cooperative administration when Valentino Brusca appeared in the *bar* from nowhere (or so it seemed to my untrained eye). He was greeted by many of those present, but not the coop members. A dandy-like persona, with his expensive sunglasses and gleaming white-teeth-smile, Valentino looked like a typical male icon from Italian glossy magazines. He was popular in San Giovanni as the younger brother of the legendary *mafioso* Giovanni Brusca and had spent a few years in prison himself. He approached me and asked if he could borrow the *Giornale di Sicilia* once I was done with it. Marelio, a cooperative administrator, quickly told him that I would indeed give him the paper as soon as I had finished. In Brusca's smile and nod, I noticed that the two young men understood that I was a stranger to the mode of newspaper sharing widely practised in bars of the village. While I had assumed that the cultural gap between these two individuals (self-categorised respectively as mafia/antimafia) would be unbridgeable, in this case they formed an easy consensus out of common sympathy for my ignorance of a local custom.

These two different vignettes, both involving the Sicilian press, elucidate the administrators' varying degrees of knowledge of local codes. Adamo, from the manual work team, told me later on, when we were talking about the Claudia incident, that 'the Palermitans just cannot get some stuff', indicating that there were local idioms and shared codes of meanings that only natives of Alto Belice were able to grasp. In my wider observations of the Palermitan administrators in San Giovanni, I noticed that some scrutinized the locals' channelling of information flows through gesturing, engaging in a

game of Lotto or offering a coffee to somebody they knew or wished to meet. Ernesto told me that there was more in spending time in bars than simply occupying one's leisure time:

For us it is a way to learn the local society, see how they behave and think, finding out who is on this side and who is on the other side...

[Question: What do you mean by this and other side?]

Well, studying locals' behaviours in bars, me and my friends can learn, in the long run, not only how to behave in San Giovanni, but also who is sympathetic to our cause, and how, and what they do for it, and whether they are philo-mafia or antimafia, and so on. So, you learn where the boundary is, between mafia and antimafia, in the village. And of course, you learn how to behave and meet people.

Sharing the same newspaper, as the vignette of Valentino Brusca suggested, was one way to meet and discuss local and national issues, which local men did vociferously almost as soon as they entered a bar. The *Giornale di Sicilia*, a conservative and mafia-tolerant newspaper printed in Palermo, was the main means of official information, in the bars, and the most promoted newspaper across all the newsagents in the village. People consumed it cover to cover between a coffee and a sweet on small tables, with friends throwing in a terse comment or two on football or politics. Rarely did anyone read an article from start to finish. Skipping through the pages as others filled in with informal commentary, it was satisfactory to learn the news and talk to one's friends at the same time. The paper provided the headlines and photographs, while the 'real news' was filled in by the live commentary. As the Rex bartender told me, 'No Sicilians really buy the paper, most copies are sold to cafés – but everybody reads it. The *Giornale* is a paper read and shared but not bought.' Incidentally, this perspective offers a potential counterpoint to Anderson's notion of 'print-capitalism' (2006: 37, 48): the convergence of capitalism and print technology in spreading information and eventually in nation building.

The reading and accompanying 'counter-reading' – or, rather, counter-speaking – of newspapers shows the sense of community that is conveyed in San Giovanni through



the layering of trust that does not simply ‘buy into’ the official printed information but, rather, re-negotiates it through filters of grounded personal knowledge channelled through rumours, which locals were more likely to believe than the newspaper itself. These rumours were ‘from the source’, as people put it: from the so-called ‘great men’<sup>174</sup> of Alto Belice (the active *mafiosi*) or from people linked to mafia networks around the island. There was no doubt about the validity of information derived from such sources, unlike the contested ‘news’ printed in the paper. The ‘Chinese whispers’ manner, in which news spread around was seen as an asset rather than a hindrance in establishing the validity of such information.

As the village lacked public spaces such as piazzas or parks, the bars attracted locals for recreation and socialising. In total there were 13 bars in San Giovanni and San Cipiriddu, strung out along *via Porta Palermo*, the road that linked the two villages. The administrators of the Falcone and Borsellino cooperatives took their lunch breaks either at Virilia or Rex spending most of their free time in San Giovanni in these neighbouring *Porta Palermo* bars, as they were relatively close to the cooperatives’ offices and generally popular and offering a less exclusively male ambience. By visiting these bars regularly and interacting with the locals, cooperative members gradually *learnt* the local codes of indirect communication – common gestures and indirect speech forms employed by the local men when discussing the news.

In San Giovanni, the cafés strongly gendered space made them the preferred public space for male gossiping, (although those engaged in this kind of talk would not call it ‘gossip’ but ‘rumour-talking’). The *bar* was the locus where male sociability was performed,

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<sup>174</sup> Although the term ‘great man’ is used as an analytical category in the anthropology of Africa (Bayart 2009) and the Pacific (Godelier 1986), and is operative in discussion about historical agency of people and collectivities (Sahlins 2004b), in the context of my ethnography, the terms ‘great men’ or ‘gentlemen’ (*gli grandi, i signori, i cappoccia*) were emic designations to speak of *mafiosi*.

indirect communication techniques developed their full range of meaning<sup>175</sup> – and where cooperative administrators negotiated mafia and antimafia boundaries. Certain men monopolised narratives about the mafia, local politics and power, construed in this semi-public ambience: to circulate convincing and interesting information was a manly capacity. Bars provided the setting for the reproduction of the blurred boundary between the public and the private, in which the figure of the *mafioso* was central as a metaphor of communication through silence (Siebert 2000).

Certain gestures signified specific things: a subtle touch of the speaker's nose delivered the message that someone was '*in odore di mafia*' (literally: in mafia odour), that is, of suspected mafia allegiances. Cooperative members replicated this gesture at the Rex as an inside joke. Nose touching became a humorous, albeit secretive expression, shared among friends when they 'sensed' *mafiosi*, a gesture conveying uncomfortable ambiguities that they nevertheless found amusing. Similarly, they often mentioned '*puḗzza*' (stench) to denote that they suspected someone in their company of being a *mafioso*, evoking an intuitive sense of unease<sup>176</sup>. At the Rex, I also noticed men pressed a thumb against the right cheek to indicate that someone was a *mafioso*. This gesture, at once straightforward and indirect, indicated an idea of mafia potency: accompanied by raising the eyebrow, the finger slightly pointing to the sideburns, it emphasised machismo. However, social interactions involving people from the 'opposite sides' of mafia and antimafia manifested connotations that not everyone shared, as is evident in Claudia's case.

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<sup>175</sup> The gendered element is prominent in analyses of indirectness (Hendry and Watson 2001). In Southern European ethnography it has often been connected with women's domestic and inter-domestic contact (Reiter 1975). The entirely male-centred *bar* becomes the locus of sociability, dominated by codes of male friendship in Mediterranean ethnographies (especially Papataxiarchis 1991, 1999; Desai and Killick 2010; but also Pina-Cabral 1989; Almeida 1996). Analyses on 'male commensality' suggest tavernas in Greece offer opportunities for debate and hearty friendship relations constructed around discourse (Papataxiarchis 1992).

<sup>176</sup> Sperber (1996) suggests a hierarchy of senses, ranging from sight, which has the most basic terminology based on it (colour words), at one extreme, to smell at the other, which is evocative since all one can say is that something smells *like* something else. Akin to symbolism, smell evokes a field of associations; it relates to connotation instead of denotation (Sperber and Wilson 1995). The emic idea of embodying smell (mafia stench) as an attribute people carried with them underlines the intuitive basis they evoked to think of mafia.

Meeting in bars often entailed allegiance to the ‘great men’ of the village. Informants spoke of old *mafiosi* who spent ‘all their elderly lives’ at that *bar*. Adamo told me he was surprised, as a child, to see that the father of his fellow classmate Genovese always sat at the *bar Circolo*. ‘Didn’t he have a job to do?’ he asked his school friend. Later, as he started going to bars himself, Adamo realised that ‘*this* was Genovese’s real job: to check and control the flows of people in and out of the bar; this was his territorial control’. While for local workers such knowledge was acquired during their coming of age in the village, in the case of administrators, it had to be learnt. On one occasion, I was enjoying my morning coffee in the company of Pasquale, a young cooperative administrator from Palermo, at the *bar Circolo*. The place was Netti’s favourite: the old *mafioso* and his friends gathered there to play cards. Ignazio Baffi, fresh out of ‘*colleggio*’<sup>177</sup> himself, walked into the bar. All the men present, working and pensioners alike, greeted him warmly, many seemingly competing for his attention. One offered the newspaper and asked if he would like a coffee: ‘So what about a coffee, Ignazio?’ (*il caffè lo vuoi, Ignazio?*). I noticed that the man making this offer was Mr Pitone, Adamo’s father-in-law, a pensioner who rented out office space to the cooperatives. Pasquale and I were surprised to witness the particular enthusiasm with which Pitone welcomed Baffi. Later on, discussing the event, we agreed that he had as much of a right to ‘hang out’ at a ‘mafia-friendly’ *bar* as we did. Of the village’s 13 bars, not all were mafia-affiliated. *Mafiosi* would visit the most central ones; in that way, the antimafia/mafia rhetoric was somehow inscribed in the local landscape, as certain spots of the village were renowned for being *mafiosi* favourites. The main church was one such spot, as leading *mafiosi*’s alms were displayed in full view.

The intricacies that involved locals such as Pitone with *mafiosi* were entangled with loose local links of relatedness. This meant that Pasquale, lacking any kinship or friendship

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<sup>177</sup> ‘College’ is a popular slang term, referring to ‘prison’, and suggesting the educative potential of the prison for *mafiosi* – educational in terms of criminal experience.

relationships with the village, felt unable to explain Pitone's loyalties to me. Not long after Baffi had made his entrance, Malva, the mayor of San Cipiriddu, in turn entered the bar. Baffi himself treated him to a coffee. Malva remarked smilingly to a few other sympathetic men that he was in the habit of meeting Ignazio Baffi in a central *bar*, which was 'an act of transparency' as this way their discussions were open to the 'public'. Probably the reason why the politician highlighted this transparency paradox (speaking to a *mafioso* in 'public') was because of his role, at the time, as the president of the Consortium, the state local antimafia apparatus. 'Pasquale confessed to me that learning of the blurred boundaries of mafia and antimafia in such palpable way – that the incumbent President of the Consortium was a friend of the *mafioso* – was distressing to him but also useful to realise.'

Offering coffee was a means to publicly recognise another man's respected position in the local male community, 'an act of honouring someone', as a bartender told me. Such recognition was often associated with people's mafia connections, for instance, treating *signori* such as Baffi or Netti to a coffee or a sweet was a noble task. Reciprocity was also the main means of engaging with others at a bar, for instance, offering to buy a piece of pastry to the man who first laid hands on the newspaper in order to claim access to the news and his company. In this way, consensus and popularity developed around the circulation of the newspaper and gifts of pastry (sweet in the morning, savoury at noontime) rotating among the men. The 'public, yet hermetically sealed' (in the words of Piero) position of bars as the hub of such information streams was fundamental to the development of sociality in San Giovanni. Locals communicated in whispers, gestures, dialect jargon, narrations and rhyming jokes in these semi-public spaces. I consider the gossiping and whispering as important data precisely *because* the actual validity of information conveyed through rumours cannot be established.

Circulating this ambiguous information was a key part of the bartenders' craft. Indeed, the reputation of barmen depended very much on their skill in narrating stories, especially from the mid 1990s, when the village reached a historic peak of mafia violence. Bartenders and *bar* locals competed amongst themselves in storytelling, as knowing stories meant they were people 'in the know' and therefore respected; moreover, they attracted clientele through this entertaining facility. The more famed a storyteller, the less he talked and the more ambiguous his narrations. *Bar* owner Virilia used his reputation as a circulator of gossip in order to attract clientele. His own life story, which I shall recount below, demonstrates the fuzziness of the conceptual distinction between mafia and antimafia. Challenging Hobsbawm's findings (1960; 1972) Blok discusses at length how bandits move around and transgress boundaries (2000: 29–43). However, Blok, like others (e.g. Lodato 2001), identifies *mafiosi* in terms of a specific 'territory' they control (2000: 88). My discussion shows that this territory is more fluid than described. Virilia's story elucidates how gossip blurs and confounds fixed categories but also how it is instrumentalised to register people in specific state categories (mafia/antimafia) and 'pick sides', a process that was economically beneficial for many.

### **7.1.2. Renegotiating boundaries: Virilia, a storyteller's story**

Marco Virilia was locally reputed to be the most articulate *bar* owner and the most sophisticated storyteller. Cooperative members often paid his *bar* a visit. Checco, the representative for the two San Giovanni cooperatives, often suggested to his fellow Palermitan colleagues that they should take their lunch break in the more indolent and classy *Virilia bar* rather than the Rex. He had established a relationship of mutual trust with Marco and often visited his *bar* to talk news and trivia; Marco often made congratulatory remarks on the work of the cooperatives. Checco was, however, unaware of the 'whispers' regarding Virilia. In male gossiping, there were specific, typified patterns to refer to a

person indirectly, usually consisting of an '*anciuria*', a nickname. Checco was aware that Virilia's *anciurie* included 'smarty' and 'foxy' but these ironic nicknames did not signal anything worrying to him. When gossip about Virilia's past eventually reached Checco and he learnt of Virilia's 'mafia connections', he admitted that he felt foolish to have trusted him and thereafter preferred not to associate with him any more.

A few locals gossiped about possible 'dealings' in Virilia's bar. Certainly, Virilia's old bar, situated opposite the house I rented from Pippo, was, according to many narratives, the favourite hangout of the *mafioso* Balduccio Di Maggio.<sup>178</sup> Balduccio had promised Virilia to buy him a bigger place. A policeman I interviewed confirmed that Virilia had been 'close to the Di Maggio clan' throughout the 1990s. Many of my research interlocutors remembered the new *bar* built in the early 1990s, complete with an almost provocatively lavish and decadent decor. 'It was too much for the village, too excessive ... but Di Maggio did it because that was his favourite place', a local man who had been imprisoned for having a mafia member told me.

Until the mid-1990s San Giovanni's rival clans were Di Maggio and Brusca. Interlocutors described how people affiliated to both clans joined each other at Marco's old venue every evening. I often visited the bar, as I lived right across the street; now called *Billiards*, it was under new management. Older locals confirmed, after countless chats, that 20-odd years ago the place had indeed been a meeting point for San Giovanni *mafiosi*. It was conveniently located at the heart of the newest part of the village, an area that had been built through the mafia's investment in construction as part of the local clans' 1980s money laundering schemes. It was due to Virilia's personal popularity that his venue

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<sup>178</sup> Second only to Brusca in *sangiovannari mafiosi* hierarchy, Balduccio Di Maggio was also high in Cosa Nostra status in the late 1980s and early 1990s. He was arrested in 1996. He was the only other person present at the controversial meeting (and symbolic mafia kiss) between Totò 'The Beast' Riina, leader of Cosa Nostra, and Giulio Andreotti, the Italian PM, in 1987 (Robb 2009: 53).

became a meeting place for the village's clans; allegedly, this clan alliance was sealed through Di Maggio and Brusca's meetings there over coffee.

Pretending to ignore the whispers around him, I kept on visiting Marco's new place. He had mentioned several times that his activity had had 'an interruption' in 1995–1996. Then, in one of our discussions, sipping his preferred *amaro*, he finally explained: the venue had suffered a serious explosion in 1995, collapsing in seconds. Excited, and wound up by the liquor, as he narrated the events, he faced me and raised his voice, as if addressing Di Maggio in person:

I was neither with you nor against you. I have my business, I am doing my things and do not want anything further to do with you. Yes, we can share stuff but don't get me involved in your stories: my wife did not sleep for a year after this [the explosion]. We would never just abandon our property, our entrepreneurial project, our bar, and leave the village. We wanted and needed to stay and they couldn't just drag us away like this ....

I spoke with several other locals about the event. Narratives from different sources confirmed that 'everything was razed to the ground'. Interlocutors who were in their 30s when the incident took place described the *bar* as a luxury symbol, a space that was 'too much' for San Giovanni – and which became a pile of shattered glass and cement overnight. The background is that, Di Maggio had been arrested in early 1993 and had turned *pentito*,<sup>179</sup> collaborating with the authorities by revealing Brusca's hideouts. This infuriated Brusca, who turned against those whom he thought were 'Di Maggio's allies': 'Virilia was just caught in the crossfire', a *bar* attendee confided to me. Memories of the explosion contributed to the rumours that Marco had been affiliated to the Di Maggio clan.

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<sup>179</sup> The formal term, used by media and state agents, is *collaboratore di giustizia* ('collaborator with justice'); *pentito*, a colloquial term, literally means 'repentant' (Allum 2006b; Lodato 2001). Twelve *mafiosi* from San Giovanni became justice collaborators, including Brusca and Di Maggio. This earned San Giovanni a poor reputation as a 'village of mafia cowards' among other Cosa Nostra members. Di Maggio's most famous (yet still disputed) confession to the authorities was that then Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti had met him and Cosa Nostra leader Riina in 1987, to arrange a non-conflict pact between state and mafia (Lodato 2012).

Some commented that ‘he got affiliated and paid for it’; those who believed that he ‘had invested in mafia contacts’ saw in his bar’s demise the ‘natural outcome of such dealings’. ‘He wanted to fly high’, an old farmer sarcastically commented; others insisted that this was an ‘expected event’ connected to the general fluctuation of ‘developments he couldn’t control’. Everyone admitted that linking to *mafiosi* was perilous because clan relations were ‘unstable’.<sup>180</sup>

In the late 1990s, in order to boost the local economy and the presumed popular anti-mafia feeling, reinforced due to the Cosa Nostra atrocities, state institutions subsidised private business of the late ‘90s that arose as a reaction to the escalation of mafia violence (Schneider and Schneider 2003). Tellingly for the nature of the mafia/antimafia distinction, Virilia managed to access EU subsidies to repair his property after the explosion. He applied for the subsidy, stating in his application that he was ‘antimafia’, registered with the police as a ‘victim of mafia’ and managed to acquire a sum from the EU’s PON-5<sup>181</sup> programme ‘for reconstruction of private enterprise damaged by mafia’. He also propagandised the antimafia cooperatives at every opportunity and became a member of Libera. When he finally received the subsidy at around the same time the antimafia cooperatives were established in the village, this caused a new flood of rumours in the village that he had been ‘paid by *the Antimafia*’, thus gaining him a reputation for being an

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<sup>180</sup> Interestingly, Adamo, from Falcone, who also emphasised the fluidity of relations with mafia, had told me, in connection with another instance, that ‘the mafia is eternal in San Giovanni: as omnipresent as the fog is in your London’. Hence, while mafia clans’ inter-relations are unpredictable, *the mafia* is seen as a constant, much as ‘family is the centre of Sicilian life’ as earlier anthropological research stated in essentialist fashion (Boissevain 1966: 19). The often used phrase ‘*capo di turno*’ (‘the current incumbent [mafia leader]’) suggests the the rapid changes of fortune of ‘the’ mafia and the risks involved in linking with any one clan instead of another. Virilia’s case implies that ‘the mafia’ is, rather, a constellation of competing clans that, at certain points, find certain specific arrangements of hierarchy that provide the balance needed to work together (Santino 1995). However, abrupt rearrangements of alliances are always imminent in the historical deployment of mafia organisation. As the violent act that reduced Virilia’s *bar* to ruins suggests, such ruptures, often caused by *pentitismo*, can have serious effects on people ‘affiliated’ to the mafia.

<sup>181</sup> A subsidy programme of the EU under its ‘security and development’ programme.



‘opportunist’ or ‘going whichever way the wind blows’. ‘Waving the antimafia flag’ showed that Virilia ‘crossed sides for interest’, as a local peasant told me.

The bombing of Marco’s *bar* was a turning point: as after the explosion he considered himself fanatically ‘committed to antimafia’. But rumours told a different story: following gossip, the police hypothesised that Virilia did have relations with mafia and had realised that maintaining his affiliations with the incumbent *mafioso* leader (*mafioso di turno*) was risky. This was also suggested when he said ‘the state is always *there*,’ suggesting that his loyalties to the state would guarantee safer results in the long run. Therefore, despite having successfully claimed further ‘security and development’ subsidies from the ministry of Internal Affairs for the reconstruction of the *bar*, local authorities turned on him. Maria Maniscalco, San Giovanni’s (leftist) mayor in 2000, conducted what Marco saw as a character assassination campaign against him. Tracking the rumours regarding the explosion, she encouraged a police investigation into what she called ‘the local mafia–business complex’. The investigation identified Virilia as an ‘affiliated entrepreneur’ in a series of press releases by the municipality. Maniscalco explained to me in an interview that she appealed to the police ‘after following a stream of whispers myself’. When I discussed this with Marco, he complained to me that ‘the cooperatives are the only genuine manifestation of the state’s presence here’.

Virilia’s appeal to the state as a protector from *mafiosi* shows that rumours and whispers about who is a *mafioso* and what it means to be a *mafioso* are located on the junction of official administration and local power relations, and operate *on* that junction, according to the circumstantial interests of locals, like Virilia. These ideas were heavily charged with secrecy, shaped in the form of cryptic messages that often incorporated code words (for Virilia, the police note that he was a ‘*pere-pere*’, i.e. ‘affiliated’).

These codes were also made of by the authorities. This intertwining of local gossiping with the mobilisation of institutional apparatuses is characteristic of the indirectness of conveying information locally. This indirectness is often instrumental to state activity. Such indirect modes can often lead to defamation and persecution, as experienced by both Virilia and Micci,<sup>182</sup> who was also bound in with allegations of mafia affiliation. Shifting sides (from mafia to antimafia, and in the legal sense of cooperating with justice authorities) is accompanied, to a greater or lesser extent, by rumours and secrecy. Virilia's story indicates the ways in which gossip became a resource for different people in the context of the changes introduced by antimafia influence in the village of San Giovanni. Gossip can attract suspicion and prosecution but careful strategising around it can also lead to support (such as the antimafia EU PON-5 funds). Virilia's case also demonstrates a key point of this chapter: the fluidity of the mafia/antimafia concepts and the ways local people shifted among them, following their own interests. Renegotiating the boundaries of the mafia and antimafia proved an endlessly beneficial practice to locals.

In the remainder of the chapter, I focus on how gossiping, a local code often blurring the mafia/antimafia boundaries, as shown above, came to be appropriated by the cooperatives' administrators to inform cooperatives' strategies. In this way, I argue, gossip acquired the status of a resource for the cooperatives, in two respects. Gossip was seen, on the one hand, as a means of *integrating* people from Palermo into local life and, on the other hand, as a means of *distancing* them from the 'calamities' of that same local life, which in the opinion of the cooperatives' administrators was 'contaminated' by its exposure to *mafiosi* activity. In this demarcating role, administrators' utilisation of gossip was directed to securing the 'cleanliness' of their activities in San Giovanni. In pursuit of this aim, administrators gossiped about 'contaminated' relationships and contacts. This type of

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<sup>182</sup> Mario Micci was the owner of the Trasi cooperative winery, as mentioned in 3.2.4.

gossip and the reputational networks it solidified marked the ‘moral universes’ of the cooperatives and hence made it an important resource for antimafia cooperativism. In addition, I discuss the way the state (specifically the police) made use of gossip, in ways juxtaposed to those of the administrators.

## **7.2. The Instrumentalisation of Gossip**

### **7.2.1. Contamination: an idiom used to mark boundaries**

Cooperative administrators and Consortium politicians frequently used the term ‘mafia’ alongside idioms of insidious growth and contamination. They characterised flows and networks deploying interests of people thought to belong to mafia clans, as ‘mafia diffusion’. Mafia was compared to disease and indeed to cancer, a language shared by public officials (such as judges, Consortium politicians). Reale’s mayor talked to me of the ‘need to isolate the contaminated cells in our society’. The mayor of Fonte, another Consortium village, characterised influences of the San Giovanni clans into his community, as a ‘metastasis’ (invoking the spread of cancer cells to other parts of the body), a term also used by sociologists in Italy (Sciarrone 2009). San Cipiriddu’s mayor Malva, despite his friendship with Baffi (explored above and in Chapter 5), told me in an interview that the ‘[mafia] lump had to be removed from the body of our community’. Keeping track of gossip regarding *mafiosi* guaranteed, for cooperative members, the preservation of legality: they saw it as a mode to frame and contain this contamination and a net to impede its spreading.

The metaphors of diffusion and flows spreading throughout the (community’s) body indicate the way that cooperative administrators conceptualised *mafiosi* as potentially contaminating any social networks in which *mafiosi* participated, even marginally. Any nexus with mafia links was deemed to be morally challenged and permanently at risk until ‘the lump is removed’, as Gianpiero underlined to me. Gianpiero, not only a Borsellino

administrator but also the head of Libera Palermo, reflected the association's views. Pamphlets and leaflets of antimafia civil society associations spoke of the perils of 'the disease of the South' (Libera 2009, Addiopizzo 2009; cf. Lumley and Morris 1997). Libera construed this paradigm in terms of mafia as a nucleus that transmitted its corrupting influence to the political and economic order. Nico, a member of the Borsellino cooperative, compared the members' anxiety about becoming exposed to 'contamination' with the fear of pollution of clean water: a social network was like a river with a dead body lying in its stream; when the clean waters pass over it, the stream becomes polluted from that point onwards. In that respect, cooperative administrators saw a flow (of things, commodities, ideas, jobs, labour and similar resources) as wholly 'impure', when a *mafioso* occupied a broker position in it. The contamination imagery was constantly evoked in documents and informal discourses among the cooperatives' administration, the Consortium, local policy actors such as the mayors, and civil society agents such as Libera activists. Some of this discourse incorporates the flow of gossip and informal information gathered in bars and public spaces in Alto Belice.

Contamination calls for containment and hence articulated the administrators' tendency to form 'moral borders' while conversely, underlining the 'cleanliness' of the cooperatives with their strictly demarcated moral universe. By knowing through gossip what was said and who said it the administrators formed discursive moral borders around the cooperatives (akin to the moral borders formed around land). This form of gossip in San Giovanni was constructed as *metatalk*, because tracking gossip was to talk about talking. A person was 'clean' not only when they were not a *mafioso* or a *mafioso's* relative but when it was proved that they did not speak with *mafiosi* or relatives of *mafiosi*, as this could be contaminating for the cooperatives. This metatalk meant sharing information about who shared information with whom. Through whispers (*sussurri*), cooperative members identified

who was ‘talked about’ (*chiaccherato*). My attention to gossip here suggests analogies with what Favret-Saada says about witchcraft in France: aiming to study practices, she included discourse in her analysis, as ‘the act, in witchcraft, is the word...witchcraft is spoken words; but these spoken words are power ... to talk, in witchcraft, is never to inform... words wage war. Anyone talking about it is a belligerent’ (1980: 8). Although the mafia is more than words, a lot of reputation and attached resources (job positions, state funding) was attached to spoken word, as it can, in specific contexts, be instrumentalised.

Ultimately, the administrators rendered gossip a powerful resource for the dominant model of antimafia cooperativism that they promoted. This was a vision in which the local community was regarded warily, seen as imbued with problematic notions of tradition and where the state and law enforcement should be present at all times.

### **7.2.2. The police: setting and blurring boundaries**

For this reason, tracking informal information became part of the cooperative administrators’ workload. It involved investigating how ‘clean’ the people who approached the cooperatives were by examining the discursive networks in which they were enmeshed. Secluded in their virtuous networking, Palermitan administrators performed this in two main ways. Firstly, they traced information by consulting the Prefecture and the police. The police provided an outline of a person’s relationships with the authorities, as documented in their official archives. Secondly and more important, the administrators followed informal means of gathering information, including paying attention to random local gossip, especially the ‘whispering’ (*sussurrì*) that took place in bars. The instrumentalisation of gossip therefore developed in a twofold way. On the one hand, state authorities documented rumours and shared this information with the cooperatives’ administrators; on the other hand, the cooperatives tracked rumours on their own behalf. In doing this, they were in fact replicating the state’s surveillance practices – but able to penetrate further.

Police practices correlated with the cooperatives members' interest in local informal information.

Specifically, the state's gossip tracking resulted in 'signalling' (*segnalazione*), documentation confirming a person's contacts with *mafiosi*. A law enforcement entity (the *Carabinieri* or the police) inscribed the person's name as a 'mafia contact' and informed the cooperatives that the person was to be avoided. 'Signalling' therefore, referred at the same time to 'official documentation' regulations and to informal gossiping techniques. As demands for labour intensified with the development of the cooperatives, this situation dramatically influenced the antimafia cooperatives' recruitment, as the cooperatives could not hire 'signalled' people.

When an agrarian labourer (*bracciante*) asked a cooperative for a job, or when a peasant who cultivated organic grapes approached the cooperatives proposing collaboration under supplier status, cooperative members mobilised a variety of control mechanisms, partly based on gossip. Firstly, through rumours documented in the police's records, they traced whether the person was 'clean' (*pulito*) and therefore suitable to collaborate with an antimafia cooperative. The administrators did not accept 'non-clean' people as members, workers or suppliers under any circumstance, as they thought that this would introduce 'contamination'. The case of Leonardo Brusca (cousin of *mafia* leader Giovanni Brusca) is typical. After his release from prison (he had served a three-year prison sentence for 'being a member of a mafia association'), he managed a Brusca *familiare* plot that bordered a Falcone land tract (as discussed in the previous chapter). When he approached his old acquaintance Giusy to ask for a possible temporary contract as a *bracciante* in the Falcone cooperative, she calmly replied, 'Are you serious? If I am to take *you*, I might as well consider closing the cooperative down altogether!'

Antimafia cooperatives' administrators checking on whether people approaching them were clean, through actual existing data and through informal but valuable gossip in bars was deemed by the Consortium to be a most efficient way of surveillance. Nevertheless, the cooperatives were double-checked themselves for cleanliness by the state's law enforcement agencies. Ironically, given the use of 'signalling' by administrators, the police sometimes 'signalled' cooperative members themselves and communicated their conduct to the cooperatives' presidents. For instance, once Piero, entering a *bar* at San Cipiriddu for his morning espresso, saw the local *Carabinieri* marshal having a coffee with young Aiola, the first cousin of a San Giovanni mafia clan leader. Piero ignored this and had a brief trivial chat with both men. The next day, he had the police at his door: he was advised not to approach that person again, as he was a *mafioso*. The police officers told him that they were obliged to communicate this information to the president of the cooperative and that after that 'it was the cooperative's own issue' to decide on Piero's future. When Piero went to the police department, he complained that he had approached Aiola only because the marshal was there, and that the marshal introduced him to Aiola. The police replied that they often spent time with known *mafiosi* and 'it was not his business imitating that conduct'. Therefore, the police strategised on the mafia/anti-mafia discourse as well and indeed demanded to monopolise this system.

'Signalling', in this way, did not directly inflict on the rule of law, but it did affect the lives of cooperative members themselves. At the very least, it made them realise they were not immune from state surveillance. More seriously, it could lead to the signalled person's expulsion from a cooperative. The case of Pino is similar to Piero's: he underwent a *segnalazione* as he 'kept contact' with his village's mafia boss. Informants confirmed, however, that what the police meant by 'contact' was that he had simply stopped to say hello when he and Netti met on the street. In a small village like San Cipiriddu it was

difficult to avoid meeting anyone and Ninno's civil engineering office was on the main road, some 30 metres from the stairs to the main church and to *Circolo*, Netti's hangout bar. In fact, Pino introduced Netti to me, as we met him by chance at *Circolo* one day.

Using gossip to strategise the next moves of a cooperative meant identifying people through specific flows of information in their villages. These flows corresponded to networks of acquaintances, affiliations and sympathies of the police, because of their will to control reputational networks and the setting/crossing of boundaries. The role of the police in negotiating the zone among mafia/antimafia behaviour is telling for the nature of these imagined boundaries (often demarcated through gossip). The police are of course the embodiment of the state's monopolisation of force, and re-establishing that monopoly had a lot to do with re-establishing legality, normality and, indeed, the perceived boundaries of mafia and antimafia. This implied that police officers had to be strict with cooperative administrators as well, and were often quite arbitrary in the way they redrew these boundaries, operating to a degree extra-legally, at least insofar as their own actions were very much unregulated. As the local *Carabinieri* marshal told me, 'I go about looking for gossip to decide my next moves, basically, asking *mafiosi* about *mafiosi*. You do the same thing, Theo. I look for informers, you look for informants'.

The boundaries were imagined through the channel of either words attached to people (such as 'fox', or '*pere pere*' for Virilia) or words that people shared with others (the discourse about 'who is talking to whom'). As mentioned, I follow Favret-Saada's take on the power of words being actions, having no autonomous meaning outside the practice of hex (1980); in San Giovanni, they construed 'moral universes' (and resources attached to them, as per jobs, or funds). The social nexuses sharing words were, in their turn, formed in what appeared to be mutually exclusive patterns shaped by law and the informal information around relatedness and friendship. Therefore, internal strategies in the



cooperatives involved informal flows of information as well as firm references to definitions of ‘mafia’ in criminal law and procedure. Often, people actively evoked the language of law, jingling with its applicability, in order to back their suspicions. Hence, they talked of Baffi’s release from prison as a legal mistake and circulated rumours in the village that he should have been imprisoned for 10 years more but a bureaucratic mistake in the *wording* of his sentencing led to his early release. Tracing these whispers through people back to their source, I found that the person who had initiated them was the local *Carabinieri* marshal.

In that respect, gossip’s relationship to the law, the police and state power is explicit and structural. In gossip becoming a resource, there is a discursive realignment, translated into structural effects, as the banality of everyday contact is decontextualised to fit within a defined category of power and ethics, a moral universe, informed by specific values.

### **7.2.3. Pursuing ‘the clean’: gossip as an antimafia resource**

As described above, the *bar* was the locus for the process of rumour tracking. The case of a prospective supplier from the neighbouring village of Camo further illustrates this. As Falcone members collaborated with the sequestered farm Tazza, which cultivated an olive grove, they became increasingly interested in olive oil extraction. Tazza was administered by a friend of Luca, Paolo Erice, whom he had met through Palermo University’s virtuous circles (as described in Chapter 4). Moving around the area where Tazza was located, Luca and his virtuous circle network friend Paolo were anxious to find a ‘clean’ (*pulito*) olive mill. Tazza was a long way from San Giovanni; therefore Luca had no information about whom to trust in the area. Some locals suggested they should go to Camo, a village located far from San Giovanni (a 40-minute drive), and speak with a local olive mill owner who could potentially become an excellent supplier.

Piero took me with him in his car and we drove to Camo: his first task was to establish whether the mill was sound and appropriate for the job. He then asked Luca to find out whether there were negative penal records on the olive mill owner in the Prefecture archives in Palermo. Nothing came out: the entrepreneur had even received public funds for his agricultural business enterprise. The documents proved that the mill manufactured organic oil exclusively, that the quality was high enough and that the owner was 'clean'. Piero's job, however, included not only performing a quality control for the prospective cooperative collaborators as an agronomist but also 'tracing a clean person through a *spicciola*', minor, detailed research on 'what people said' about the people who could become the cooperative's prospective collaborators. He described this process as 'a small-time control [*controllo spiccio*] that I do myself, often the most important, as it reaches to webs of contacts the Prefecture cannot arrive at'. The route he generally followed was to ask a local provider or similar contact 'what is said in the village' about the prospective collaborator or worker. Through this kind of gossiping, the cooperative established some security with regard to their next moves in 'dealing with people who are clean'.

He therefore went back to the centre of Camo to meet inconspicuously with a grain supplier to the cooperative and ask him what he knew about the olive mill. Although the supplier knew hardly anything, he introduced Piero confidentially to the owner of the bar where they took their coffee. The barman told us he trusted 'the antimafia': he himself was a member of the Addiopizzo organisation of anti-racket retailers. His choice to join the Addiopizzo had resulted in his *bar* being burnt down by the main local *mafioso* clan of the village a year ago – the state had helped out with subsidies for reconstruction. Piero knew from this that the barman would be very much attuned to local gossip regarding mafia allegiances. Indeed, when asked, the barman revealed that the supplier with whom the Falcone cooperative were about to sign a partnership contract collaborated with that local

mafia clan. The relationship with the *mafiosi*-brokers guaranteed the olive mill owner a steady supply of olives and a loyal clientele, both as a result of mafia's social influence.<sup>183</sup>

The cooperative cancelled the agreement with the olive mill. Piero explained to me that:

small talk in bars is the most efficient way to find out about people's cleanliness; the whispers you hear here and there make you aware of local doings. Of course, we do not want to collaborate with a supplier who walks holding hands with these people [*vá a bracciato con questi*].

The cases of Pino and Piero's 'signalling', as well as the Camo vignette and Virilia's story, described above, underline the fundamental assumption I identified regarding gossip in San Giovanni: sharing information is precisely about information sharing. In the context of antimafia gossip, people speak about who speaks to whom. This *metatalk*, I argue, renders gossip a prominent material resource for what I am calling the 'moral border setting' work of the antimafia cooperatives' administrators. Moreover, it is a means of accessing further material resources, thus forming part of the ongoing social arrangements for constituting the antimafia cooperatives. By clearly dividing local social relations into distinct moral universes, access to the cooperatives is ensured only to those free from contaminating contact with *mafiosi*.

In these conditions, antimafia cooperatives rendered rumours and gossip an instrument of internal policymaking. The role of gossip as fundamental in reputation building is widely documented (Ghosh 1996; Kirsch 2010). What is original in the case of the antimafia cooperatives is the way tracking gossip in the gendered spaces of the bars is linked to processes of separating the cooperatives from their broader social ambience. Where anthropological accounts have characterised gossip as a resource for accumulating reputation (Engle Merry 1997), here gossip is a resource in a different way, a means of

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<sup>183</sup> There is an apparent conflict of values here: what wins a good reputation for some, mafiosity, is seen as a contra-indicator by Piero.

exclusion/inclusion in the work of creating a bounded universe shielded behind ‘moral borders’, which diverged from local values. However, the attempt to construct work and experience horizontality within the cooperatives – an important ideal – is trumped by the use of gossip by the administrators, as it separates cooperatives from local people, including the workers of the cooperatives themselves, forming a hierarchy of reputations in which the administrators, because ‘free’ of any local connections, come to be the local representation of an ‘uncontaminated’ antimafia element.

Schneider and Schneider’s classic monograph proposed that ‘control over networks’ is the source of mafia’s brokerage power (1976). In a more recent book, they identified (hierarchical) ‘reputational networks’ as an important means of social cohesion in Sicily, which impacts on production and reproduction patterns, building people’s and families’ ‘respectability’ (1996: 195–96). My ethnographic discussion builds on these insights. Utilising reputational networks, administrators of antimafia cooperatives render gossip a resource, appropriating it from the local context, to use against mafia. These networks mediate categories of cleanliness, and antimafia that are further linked to other resources (land and labour) available through the cooperatives. Focusing on the flows of discourse and the modes of communication helped them to construct the binary mafia/antimafia and their conceptual separation in daily discourse.

As noted above, cooperative members instrumentalised information gathered through gossip as often as state actors did, although with more effective penetration of local networks. The gossip character of such communication was often seen as a way to ‘know a territory’ and infiltrate those spheres of information considered too intimate for the state to reach. The discourse of ‘cleanliness’ creates a difference from state actors, demarcating (in sensorial terms) the social ambience of the antimafia cooperatives. Whereas gossip and rumours blur the boundaries within which the people of the

cooperatives were meant to act, they were also used to register people on one or the other 'side'. This was particularly noticeable in Virilia's case but was also true of the 'signalling' of the cooperatives and the Camo vignette.

Gossip in Alto Belice implied both to tell stories (gossip with a narrative) and to talk about talking (gossip about who talks with whom). The antimafia cooperatives administrators mainly utilised this latter form, to identify who was a mafia affiliate. Gossip thus helps to set the limits of law's applicability in that it conveys *meta-information*. In that respect, when a person was established to have contacts (i.e. speak to, share words with) with someone recognised as a *mafioso* in legal terms, that person would be excluded from the cooperatives. Using gossip to strategise the next moves of a cooperative meant identifying people's location in specific flows of information in their villages. These flows corresponded to networks of acquaintances, affiliations and sympathies.

Gossip consequently entailed controlling channels of cleanliness, as mafia contamination transmits through words, through sharing information and talking with people perceived as contaminated. There is more interest in speech about speech, in knowing who spoke to whom than what they said: as in Favret-Saada's case (1980), words are not dangerous because of their content, but because of their mere existence, addressing someone considered potentially contaminating. The use of indirect communication, rumours, whispers, gestures, in short, of platforms evoking and conveying informal information in the form of gossip, was fundamentally important for the cooperatives' ethical positionality. Reproducing a clear distinction between 'the mafia' and 'the antimafia', administrators employed gossip to distinguish sharply these two 'moral universes'. This has had impacts on the work relations of the cooperatives, in the process of the administrators' seclusion behind the iron cage that these 'moral universes' construed.

## Conclusion

This chapter has shown how informal information, in the form of gossip, is important in the everyday lives of locals, *mafiosi*, state authorities and the cooperatives' administrators. This involves contradictions. Firstly, I showed the fuzziness of the mafia/antimafia distinction, in the ways that it was *used*. As people circulated flows of information construed to lie in the zone between mafia and antimafia, in the village's bars, gossip was a vector of resources for locals (barmen and *mafiosi* in particular) *and* for state authorities. Barmen used gossip to boost their reputation, for instance by narrating stories to attract clientele or resources (funds from EU antimafia programs). Blurring and crossing boundaries between mafia/antimafia was nuanced in the case of Virilia, which shows that the antimafia has been successful in providing opportunities for profit to some locals, some *sangiovannari* being concerned with obtaining a 'clean image' and disassociate themselves from the mafia clans. Therefore the local gossip about who is mafia/antimafia has obtained new significance in San Giovanni. The police used it to enforce the law on locals, tracking rumours about their 'affiliations' with *mafiosi*, often using the information provided to them by *mafiosi* themselves, operating between the border crossing and the border building processes and, thus, partaking in both.

Secondly, I showed how the administrators rendered gossip a medium of separation. The administrators' virtuous circles (4.1), their moral bordering of the land (6.2), their use of gossip, are all part of their attempts at protective seclusion. In San Giovanni, where they perceived *mafiosi* and people affiliated to them as a threat of contamination, this had impacts on the degrees to which they allowed to become intertwined with local livelihoods. As the administrators come from networks unrelated to San Giovanni, their use of local information secured and consolidated their positions in the cooperatives. They participated in gossip flows not in order to engage with the life of the

local community but to identify local mafia affiliations and distinguish themselves from them. Their idioms of contamination and cleanliness served this aim.

This argument feeds into my general argumentation about the specificities of the division of labour of the antimafia cooperatives. I showed that gossip in the specific sense of *who is talking with whom* is a major resource for administrators, in its capacity to identify people with whom the cooperatives could collaborate. This further separated the administrators from their local co-members in the cooperatives, as it contributed to the antimafia cooperativism, suspicious of local practices proposed by the Consortium. Using gossip, the outcome of how (and to whom) people speak to strategise the next moves of a cooperative implied locating people in flows of affiliations and sympathies in their villages: ‘whispers’ around local people often challenged their position and status.

The above meanings and utilisations of gossip as a resource entailed two important ideological consequences. Firstly, for cooperatives, and to an extent for the state, the contamination idiom is produced by gossip as *metatalk*. In my ethnographic depiction of people’s behaviours around land plots, the boundaries of the land were identified with moral borders for the administrators. Here, the flows of gossip functioned as the demarcator of their ‘moral universe’; alluding to contamination was a means of securing this universe’s boundaries. Secondly, local people, *mafiosi* and cooperative members, imagine the state (Gupta 1997; 2005), through the semantics of the circulation of informal information. The administrators keep back from the local community, while referring, to explain their work, to an ‘imagined’ one. This practice of imagining mobilises a set of social relations that contributes to the activity of the cooperatives and hence has material consequences. People are aware of how discourse can elicit different degrees of law enforcement: through ‘signalling’ (Piero) or defamation strategies (Virilia).

Gossip is therefore, in Alto Belice, adapted to the experience of familiarisation and distance of the Palermitan middle-class administrators in the everyday life of San Giovanni. The fact that they relied upon gossip is informed by their lack of kinship connections in the area and the ideological separation of home and work that, I argue, underlies the politicised endeavour of the antimafia cooperatives to dissociate from certain local codes and practices. Therefore, the separation process imposed through rendering gossip a way to distinguish clear sides between mafia and antimafia is embedded in the subjectivities of those pursuing this process, themselves the products of separation. The administrators commuted to San Giovanni in the morning and returned to Palermo in the evening. The cooperatives were their work space, Palermo was their home. The separation of work from kinship links is the fundamental premise on which activities such as gossip tracking are based. This separation is an axis of the antithesis between the two teams of the cooperatives, reproducing unequal relations within them. In the conclusion of this thesis, I shall discuss this argument and suggest ways to tackle the moral facet of the division of labour.



# Chapter 8

## Conclusion

### 8.1. A Summary of the Argumentation

As stated in the introduction to the thesis, I set out to analyse the differentiations, framed in moral terms, running through antimafia cooperatives' division of labour and, in line with this, to examine the consequences of changes (and continuities) that the cooperatives contributed to the lives of individuals, families and institutions in Alto Belice. The thesis showed that differentiations among members are informed by obligations and values *outside* a cooperative as much as by work performed *within* it, as members are embedded in (often conflicting) broader social relationships. This chapter synthesises the arguments developed in relation to the ethnography, and brings the argument one last step forward, to reach some overall conclusions.

The narrative of the thesis could be summarised as follows. Sicilian agrarian cooperativism was framed by tensions between peasant mobilisation, the antimafia movement, mafia, and the state (Chapter 3). A division of labour emerged in antimafia cooperatives, wherein administrators were recruited through political networks and workers through kinship, two incompatible spheres of relatedness (Chapter 4). Workers' livelihoods outside the cooperatives continued to be entangled with informal local practices, some of which were, ironically, reinforced by antimafia cooperativism's promotion of waged employment (Chapter 5). The division within the cooperative was also expressed in different moral evaluations of confiscated land, whereby legal property was juxtaposed to local values (moral ownership), resulting in uncomfortable social arrangements between neighbouring land plots (Chapter 6). Just as with moralising discourses of land, administrators appropriated local gossip in order to further demarcate

moral borders around their own, and ‘their’ cooperatives’, position in the locality (Chapter 7).

Here I present the characteristics of these boundaries and relations in three main arguments. I argue firstly, that two different moral economies developed within the cooperative framework, because of different community conceptualisations: the imaginary of administrators and the experience of workers (8.2). I then argue that members’ consciousness and experiences of relatedness draw on a reality beyond the cooperatives; in consequence, tensions, but also alliances, arise. Class, then, relates not only to labour but to members’ broader relationships in their community, including a range of loyalties, such as kinship, which thus becomes a crucial feature of cooperativism (8.3). I also propose one final argument, hoping it delineates future research avenues: relationships between informal and regulated categories of labour develop in relation to each other in non-neoliberal contexts, including pro-employment projects such as antimafia cooperativism (8.4).

## **8.2. Different Moral Economies and Values**

Members’ different ideas of community participation were rooted in the class-based social relations in which people’s everyday lives outside the cooperatives were enmeshed. The values administrators pursued can be classified as a moral economy, informed by their social situatedness. Politically driven cooperatives *are* founded on normative principles, in this case the state ideology of legality. Unlike the relevant sociology (Jamieson 2000; Sciarrone 2009; Armao 2009; Varese 2011; cf. Santino 2005), I suggest that legality is not neutral but socially ordered (and ordering), rooted in ideologies of community. The Consortium’s promotion of state intervention in Alto Belice, endorsing an abstract ‘discursive normativity’ (Ferguson 1994: 30), aimed at the restitution of assets to ‘the community’ (Frigerio and Pati 2007). Administrators, being Palermitans, middle-class and not owning land, were more inclined than workers to align with these normative lines, their

sense of the ‘community’ being divorced from local experience. Steinmetz’ idea of the languages of the state’s situatedness in social circumstances (1999) can be applied here vis-à-vis the urban civil society in which the administrators’ lives were embedded, in line with Schneider and Schneider’s analysis of the 1990s antimafia movement (2002a).

Therefore, I argue that the administrators’ ideological grounding is reflected in an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 2006) that echoes the aims and principles of the Consortium and Libera. Considering Alto Belice’s ‘tradition’ as mafia-prone, they saw continuities between cooperatives and local codes as discredited. They endorsed an interventionist state, arranging access to resources (land, and through it, labour) for the benefit of the ‘community’. The provision of work meant, to quote Ernesto, ‘a mission’; the confiscated land, in Luca’s words, was ‘whatever the state stood for, in Sicily’. Recognising a broader moral project in antimafia cooperativism, they developed recruitment strategies through ‘virtuous networks’ (4.1), standardisation of labour in employment (5.1), and discourses on land’s moral borders (6.2) and instrumentalised gossip to detect dangerous *mafiosi* ‘contamination’ (7.2.1, 7.2.3) (although gossip tracking was equally a tool for redefining social obligations and boundaries for other groups).

Local workers and member-workers lacked the administrators’ financial rewards. Their livelihoods were in part dependent on their private land tenure, participation in informal income strategies (in which they followed mafia-influenced gendered ideologies) and exposure to contacts with *mafiosi* neighbours. Spilling out of the cooperatives’ employment setting, their livelihoods were therefore associated with an experience-based understanding of community, a ‘way of life’, constituted by values distinct from those of the Consortium’s model of cooperativism. Precisely *because* it was embedded in local codes and activities, workers’ experience of participating in antimafia cooperatives eventually

proved dynamic, changing aspects of the ways they lived their lives, although often contradicting the consciously politicised cooperativism model administrators pursued.

‘Tradition’, so charged a term for Alto Belice, for workers implied viticulture cooperation intrinsically entangled with the antimafia movement’s local history (3.1.1). The values they endorsed were relational and dynamic: their cooperative participation expanded notions of kinship, creating antimafia families (4.2) and endowed work with masculinised idioms, as workers felt proud they ‘embodied’ the coops (5.1). Continuities in their livelihood practices (5.2 and 5.3), and contiguities with neighbours’ land plots (6.2), developed creative, albeit messy, interactions with fellow locals (even *mafiosi*). These interactions allowed for interconnections between processes outside (e.g. informal work) and inside the cooperatives’ activity (waged labour), often merging coop work with local life (e.g. in ‘uncomfortable’ encounters at confiscated plots), this way imploding the cooperatives’ ‘standardisation’ framework. Therefore, the ways workers made up their livelihood (partly) through antimafia cooperativism, in a pragmatic, lived way, meshed local codes with channels of change, denoting ‘an escape from -isms’ (Whyte and Whyte 1991, regarding Mondragòn). Despite tensions, the ‘informal’ aspects of their livelihoods, embedded in morals about land (Abramson 2000a), mediated kinship (Carsten 1995), reputation (Schneider and Schneider 1996), and ‘mutual aid’ developed *alongside* rather than *against* antimafia cooperative (legality-oriented) activity.

I argue that this contributed to the cooperatives’ ‘success’, which relied on this class-related, differentiated coexistence of informal and ‘regularised’ conditions, because the interlinking of legality and informality alleviated cooperative tensions. Tolerating (to an extent) what took place *outside* the cooperatives, administrators consolidated their privileged positions *within* them, as member-workers (and daily workers), pursuing informal practices *outside* them, compensated for the lack of remuneration and democracy *within* them. In that

respect, legality and informality co-articulated reproducing class in the coops. The moral economies developed in cooperatives corresponded to values regulated by the state (pursued by administrators) and a set of *values* continuous with local cultural codes (pursued by workers). The interaction of different values denoted fissures; in consequence, a classed heterogeneity bracketed different morals in the same cooperative. This ‘conflicting complementarity’ (Creed 1998: 8) bound different moralities and indeed moral economies.

### **8.2.1. Values in cooperatives**

Drawing on the idea of embeddedness (Polanyi 2001) of economic activity in social life (and the values associated with people’s grounded experience) to see resources as also embedded (like land, as in Hann 1998b; 2009a) in socially arranged relationships can capture the distinct, and even contradictory, realities sheltered under the same cooperatives. This is because a cooperative’s resources are not ‘embedded’ uniformly, but across different contexts and different people encompassed in a cooperative. Rather than reifying cooperatives, the focus here is on *their members and daily workers* – and their contradictory circumstances, as they bring different values (translated into different practices) into the organisations they compose. This entails, specifically, focusing on livelihoods and the subjective experience of participating in cooperatives, in order to nuance ideas of the ‘embeddedness’ of economic activity, thus making space to account for the differentiated moral values that co-exist in real-life economic organisations. This is particularly salient in the context of a politicised cooperative project bent on re-evaluating, in a context of legality, conflicting values. This interaction provokes tensions in cross-team relations, engendering differentiations among members. Members’ values are dynamic, open to new configurations, interacting with the (partly) imposed values brought about by new developments (the confiscations). It is partly this dynamism that renders cooperatives, ‘modular’, as explored historically and ethnographically.

While different morals and values reflected stratifications, *shared* values prevented further hierarchisations, thus contributing to the composition of enduring and efficient cooperatives. Shared values between local member-workers and daily workers solidified their entanglement in common kinship relations and informal work. Daily workers did not stratify out as a third group in the cooperatives' division of labour. Workers sharing common experiences, regardless of their member/non-member status, solidified the manual workforce in one team. Kinship relations across daily workers and member-workers, expressed in *raccomandazioni* flows, and shared local codes (moral ownership) and practices ('mutual aid' work) bound them together in one group. Moreover, a widespread informal practice (registering land to wives) proved beneficial for daily workers, providing supplementary income in terms of state benefits, which permanent member-workers were not eligible to claim. Also, despite the coops' lack of internal democratic representation, as coops' manual workforces (both member-workers and other workers) maintained contact with neighbours in land plots, or continued 'mutual aid' practices, they were more visible to local society (being the face of the cooperatives) than the administrators.

### **8.3. Kinship, Class and 'Codes' in Political Cooperativism**

I have shown that cooperatives accommodated families and new models of relatedness developed, inclusive of labour and politics (antimafia families). Therefore, as suggested earlier, reifying local relations by considering workers' values as statically localised, would hinder our appreciation of real developments on the ground, as 'local codes' are not limited to a locality but open to broader systems, as per Schneider and Schneider (1976). Unlike their ethnography, in which such codes are continuous with mafia, however, I have shown that, according to circumstance, they can accommodate antimafia change.

The dynamic role of kinship, proved a fundamental aspect of the cooperatives' conflicting complementarity. Strict divisions of labour, on the one hand, determined each team's

relatedness idioms, which in turn, reinforced the division; on the other hand, these idioms merged kinship with work, thus also contributing to the development of cooperativism'. In Chapter 4, I showed how the differentiated experience of taking part in cooperatives fractured coops in different spheres of relatedness, recruitment tactics and idioms of *each* group that could not communicate *between* groups. The clash of idioms between the teams, associated to the different spheres of relatedness was deemed as patronage. Importantly, what registered as 'patronage' for workers was the *sidelining* of kinship (by political networking), not its promotion, contrary to what is described in some of the relevant 'Mediterranean' literature (Gellner and Waterbury 1977; Gilson 1996; Pardo 1996; Cole 1997; Assmuth 1997; Mitchell 2002; but see 'clientelism', from Chubb 1982 to Piattoni 1998). Antimafia cooperativism therefore, developed *through* (distinctive) kinship idioms, rather than against them.

In consequence, the enduring association of kinship with mafia in Sicily (Gunnarson 2008; Dino 2011; indeed 'blood' kinship, as per Blok 2000; Dickie 2011) can be critiqued in the same breath as contesting the concept that an enduring cooperative is pulled together by 'trust' and meritocracy only. Social theory, drawing on Simmelian notions of social cohesion to argue in favour of trust as necessary for economic cooperation (Fukuyama 1995), and specifically for cooperatives (Cook et al. 2007), often overlooks the significance of kinship as underpinning cooperatives. For Sicily, the lack of cooperation and cooperativism has been attributed partly to a 'kinship-based' mafia tradition (Centorrino et al. 1999). Gambetta argued that cooperative institutions rely on anonymous technologies such as 'trust in the market' (Gambetta 1989: 296–396; cf. Hart 2000). Taking this line of thought further, he asserts that the mafia fills the lack of trust in Sicily, by offering 'protection' to Sicilians (1996), implicitly echoing Putnam's classic point on Southern Italy's 'problematic' civic traditions (1993).

But an *antimafia* movement that historically mobilised families (Puglisi 2005; Chapter 3) tells us otherwise. Equally, in current antimafia developments, kinship enriches cooperativism, allowing for it to be accommodated in local contexts (chapter 4). Therefore, the ethnographic findings here on (kinship-based) *raccomandazioni* recruitment, and the modification of local notions of kinship (antimafia families), challenge received ideas of familism. Rather than ahistorical associations of kinship with ‘tradition’, my data reflects ideas of ‘flexible familism’, which engulfs changes in labour relations (Kalb 1997: 213–32) and dynamic interactions of work and home (Hareven 2000). When they seemingly express continuity with a problematic (mafia) ‘past’, as per the locals’ defence of mafia’s moral ownership of land, local codes, rather, stand against another reification: the recently imposed re-juridification of land (Mundy and Pottage 2004; Abramson 2000a).

The moral economy of the manual workforce, containing a range of subjective experiences of cooperation, reflects the rich and dynamic nature of cooperatives. Kinship and gender are central, albeit hidden facets, in constituting experiences of participation in collective work, which gender solidarity renders a ‘second family’ for members (Ashwin 1999: 146). Although not forming part of the agenda of antimafia cooperativism, local codes, kinship and gender are remarkably important, as they contribute to cooperativism, in an indirect way, as much as the political project inspiring it. Women’s invisibility in Alto Belice, linked to their centrality in households’ economic strategies (5.2.2), as well as to how inheritance through men and women inflects categories of property differentially where the law/mafia interface is concerned (6.1), is a fundamental aspect of members’ extra-cooperative activity, invisibly shaping cooperatives. As noted, cooperatives’ employment meant that registering land to wives was beneficial for daily workers’ families (5.2), thus expanding the social base of the cooperatives.



The administrators' networking, however, promoted (and derived from) a model of antimafia cooperativism suspicious of kinship. The fact that administrators did not live in Alto Belice, but commuted there from Palermo, thus effectively separating work and home, meant that their *imagined* sense of involvement in the local community went unchallenged. Their lack of exposure to local obligations and networks involving *mafiosi*, and their levels of remuneration (sufficient without seeking income *outside* the cooperatives' employment) allowed them to endorse unhesitatingly the legal framework of cooperatives' waged work. The cooperatives' multileveled 'cohesion' was, then, premised on a politics that inherently, if unconsciously, reproduced unequal work relations within them, informed by the class-related, broader social arrangements in which coops operated. In building on this insight, anthropological accounts tracing class among peasants in livelihood practices and various types of income seeking, including waged work, have been useful (Smith 1987; Kearney 1996). Recent anthropological accounts re-position class as an analytical category to understand community relationships such as neighbourhood (Mollona 2005), and unionism (Mollona 2009b), the tensions between work and family (Pun 2005: 49–78) and concerns with people's movement and fixity between (often informal) agrarian and industrial work (Narotzky and Smith 2006; Lem and Gardiner 2010a). In antimafia cooperatives, workers moving between the coops' employment, and local 'community' codes and informal practices *outside* the coops, alleviated tensions *within* them, in ways that prevented class conflict between administrative and workforce teams, which was never openly expressed. Even more so, legality-oriented formal labour in cooperatives *secured* new informal livelihood opportunities for workers, such as welfare benefits. Informalities in workers' livelihoods developed not only alongside legality but, often, *because* of it.

I argue that members' practices outside politicised cooperative contexts deserve more attention in order not only to comprehend their livelihoods but also inequalities of

cooperatives. In antimafia cooperatives, the political project of curbing mafia was defined in terms of disembedding cooperative economic activity from certain traditions. Class position was informed by members' different negotiations of the local arrangements in which resources (land, labour) were embedded, especially regarding local obligations and networks (e.g. mutual aid work) which are not in line with the movement's political principles. While consolidating cooperatives' internal division of labour, the tension between different values also indicated the dynamic nature of workers' kinship relations or the use of local codes (gossip) by administrators. In Alto Belice, the realm of standardised employment and jural codification of property in land was both contested and complemented, in members' experience, by local values, which unfolded in informal economic activity in a project seemingly 'protectionist' for labour.

#### **8.4. Cooperativism as Labour and Neoliberalism: Employment and Informal Work**

The major breakthrough of antimafia cooperatives', recognised by the majority of informants, was the creation of jobs in an area of chronic informal economic activity and unemployment. Cooperative employment, however, converged with continuities on the ground, and often intensified informal ideas about recruitment, work and land among cooperative participants, as I showed, developing alongside informal economy practices (e.g. benefit fraud and *lavoro nero*). Locals' livelihoods integrated the stable income from cooperatives' waged employment, maintaining community schemes of 'mutual aid' through which households informally exchanged money for (unregistered) work (5.3). Moreover, the moral connotations of ownership constantly challenged the rigid framework that sought to contain confiscated land within new property boundaries (6.2).

These findings can be used to address Gudeman's account of the tension between market and community in a modern economy (2008). Economies vary depending on the degree to which people produce for the self or group (community) or for others (market)

(Gudeman 2001), the main local model being ‘the house’, counterposed to – set outside – market exchange, and aiming to ‘maintain’ what actually are subsistence economy relations (Gudeman and Ribera 1990). In Alto Belice, instead, a hidden exchange of money for labour is glossed as ‘mutuality’. While Gudeman recognises waged labour as part of the models of livelihood he discusses (1986: 37–43), he does not take into account how informal economy practices (often influenced by local ideologies including mafia) adopt these ‘community’ models, as I show in Chapters 5 and 6. Locals’ (and local cooperative workers’) idea of community was thus mediated by commodified relationships, as for instance, ‘mutual aid’ entailed the exchange of money for (unregistered) waged work.

This insight brings my findings into debate with wider discussions of informal work and neoliberalism in current anthropological literature, specifically concerning the way deregulation of labour markets has proliferated precarious petty income opportunities, often informal (a qualitative break in the meaning of work, as per Standing 2011; Castells 2011). Much of the recent literature addresses people’s modes of resistance, or responses, configured in a variety of ways, to the breaking down of work categories that neoliberal structural adjustment introduced (Hann and Hart 2009, 2011; Ong 2006; Comaroff 2001; Hart et al. 2011). This line of argument states that the neoliberal attack on regulated labour markets has broken down previously existing boundaries between different categories of labour, a situation encouraging, or even forcing people into petty (often illicit) entrepreneurial activity, and seasonal employment – either as a supplement to classic forms of wage labour, or as a substitute for it. Some authors suggested that uncertainty in the labour market has led to the development of brokerage (e.g. ordering people’s ‘pluriactivity’ (Narotzky and Smith 2006)), in which, some point out, mafia-like organisations find a niche (Gill 2001; Volkov 2002). Others emphasise that, in this general break in the meaning of work, precariousness constitutes exploitative, alienated labour experiences (Procoli 2004;

Smart and Josephine 2006; Standing 2009); flexibilised labour regimes produce specific ‘types’ of workers, who adapt to insecure work conditions by becoming ‘creative’ (Freeman 1998; 2000). Such ethnographies present the neoliberal state as unwilling to guarantee a stable and regulated labour market and hence eroding regimes of labour rights. In most cases, people’s plural economic activity is understood as taking place *because* of the ongoing informalisation of labour relations associated with neoliberalism.

My ethnographic discussion diverges from such anthropological work in that, in Alto Belice, the ‘neoliberal’ Italian state, because of the politicised project to curb the mafia (and the related labour patronage) that it supports through cooperativism, instead of eroding, actually *pursues* the enactment of workers’ rights, as the coops’ regularisation (‘standardisation’) of work in employment’ suggests. This is because the political framework of legality included labour (alongside another main resource: land). However, I also showed that incorporating vulnerable workers into regularised regimes of labour rights does not imply that their everyday economic activity becomes ‘standardised’. On the contrary, stable coop work co-articulates with informal means of livelihood and localised moralities, often continuous with ‘problematic’ traditions. Alto Belice locals, seeking a viable configuration of formal employment and other means of livelihood, mobilised practices informed by gendered ideologies of labour (and, ironically, perhaps influenced by mafia), embracing new informal income opportunities by strategising vis-à-vis the state (land registration to women) or defending older ones (‘mutual aid’ informal work schemes).

This thesis’ opening vignette suggested that the pursuit of workers’ rights in Alto Belice (through the coops) has had positive results. This may seem to be undermined by what the ethnography has shown about the fissures and contradictions of this endeavour, underlining the richness of local life (unfolding in bars, in confiscated land plots, and in the cooperatives themselves), which proved impossible to contain in strict jural categories.

Nonetheless, the cooperatives *did* introduce significant positive changes to the lives of an increasing number of people in Sicily; the values the cooperatives represent (albeit in dynamic relation – and conflict – with local ones) still count as the most tangible success of the antimafia movement in Italy. It is up to future developments to see whether this configuration of cooperativism within broader neoliberal developments will further affect people's livelihoods in Alto Belice and elsewhere in Sicily, and how such effects can be beneficial. This is not a matter of Lampedusa's fatalism vis-à-vis change ('everything has to change in order for everything to remain the same'). It is about admitting that cooperatives are, willy-nilly, embedded in a particular social context, which for historical, economic and political reasons does not 'fit' their ideology– though the cooperatives' pragmatic support in the form of jobs is appreciated. As 'cooperatives', like 'livelihoods', are entangled in broad social realities, the future development of cooperatives should be more appreciative of local context (Checker and Hogeland 2004), attentive to local livelihood models, codes, and kinship, in order to contribute to deeper and more enduring social change.

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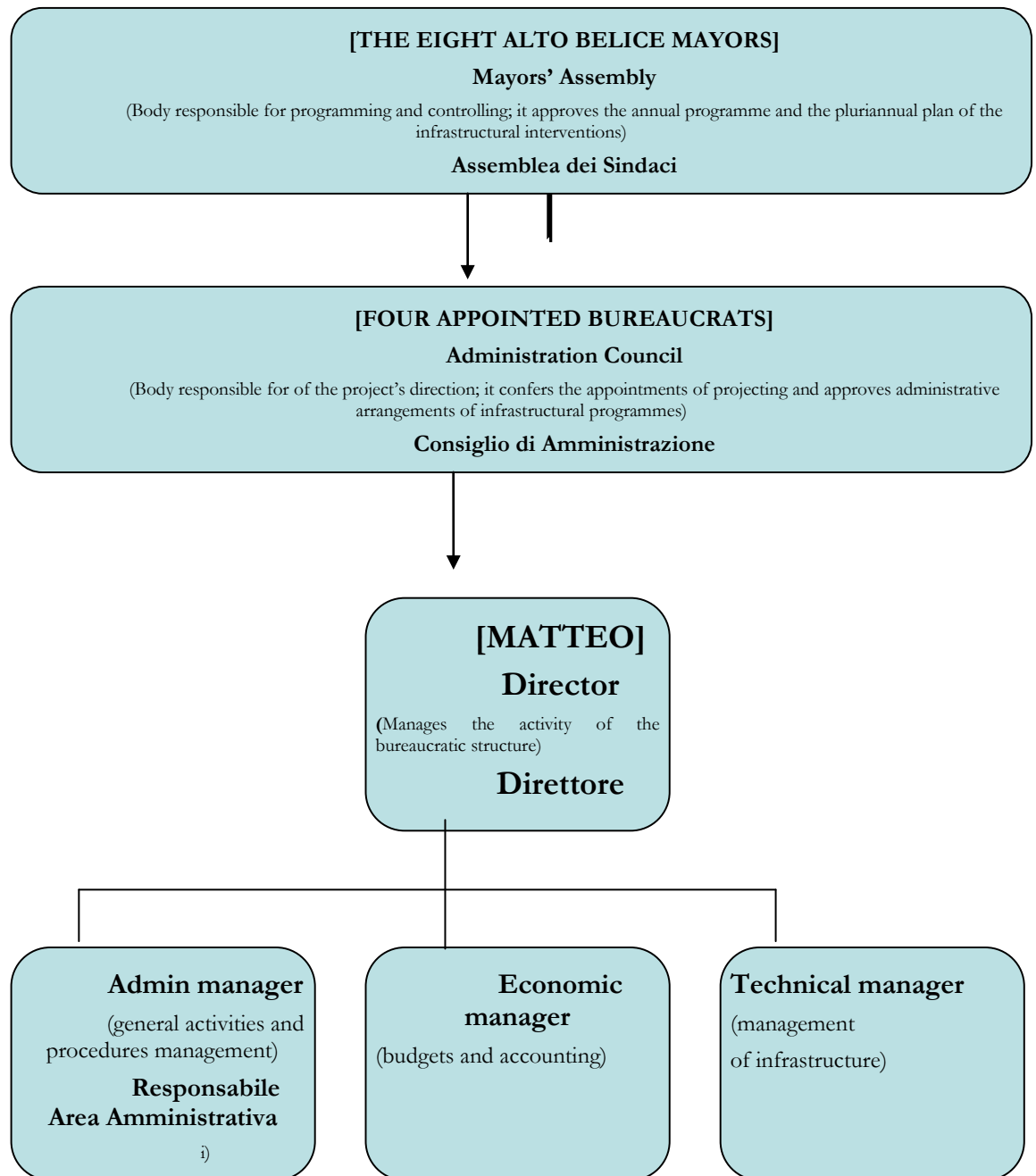
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# Appendices

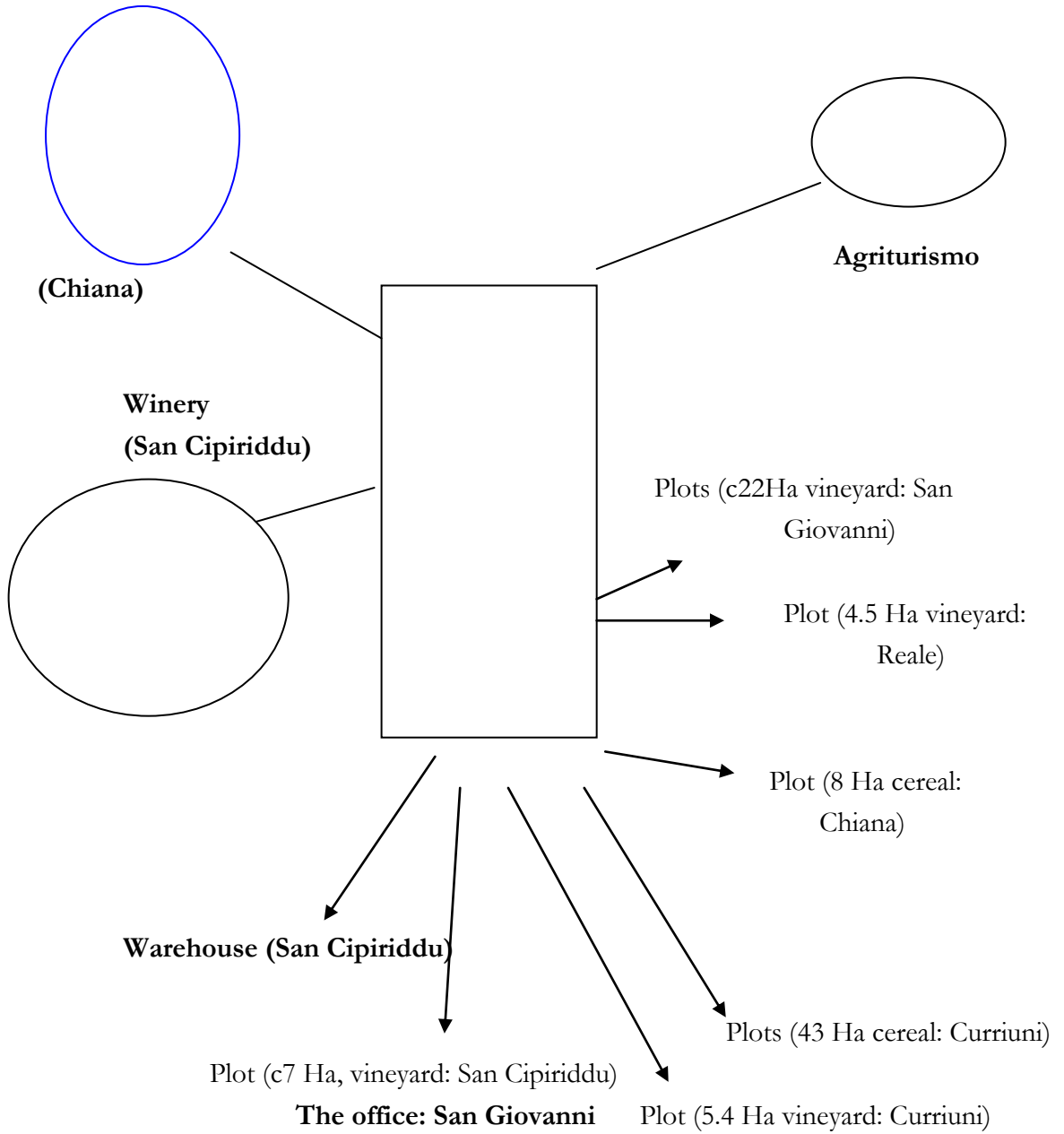
## Appendix 1

### THE STRUCTURE OF THE CONSORTIUM 'DEVELOPMENT AND LEGALITY'



## Appendix 2

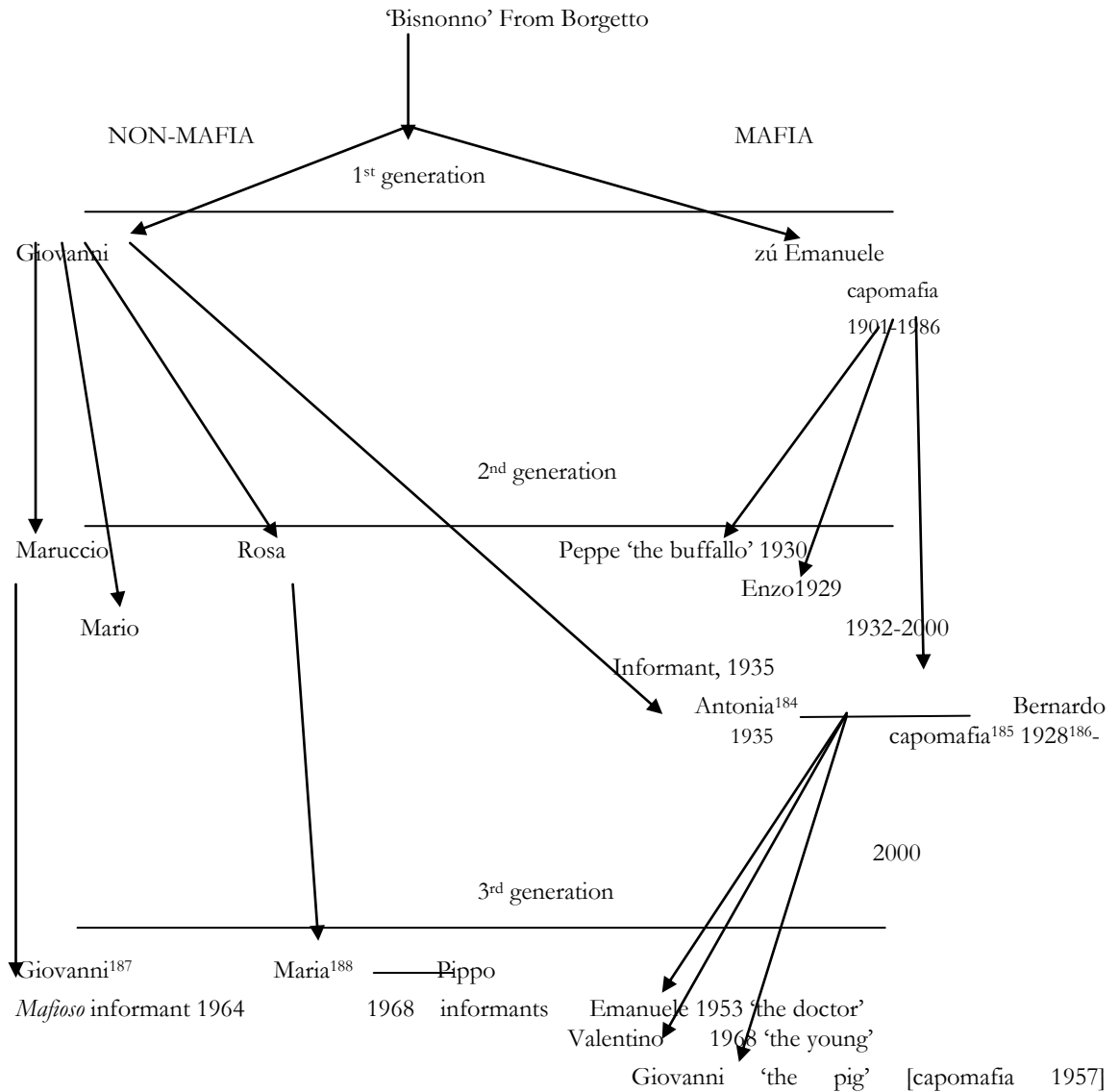
### SOME ASSETS OF FALCONE



## Appendix 3

### THE BRUSCA FAMILY HISTORY

(A schematic representation of the most important SG mafia family genealogy)



<sup>184</sup> Notice the cross-cousin marriage between a non-mafia and a mafia part of the Brusca family.

<sup>185</sup> The term means 'leader of the mafia clan'. Notice that 'clan', in this emic term, on which the state builds, implies really a male-ascendance family genealogy. While Emanuele, his son Bernardo, his sons Giovanni, Valentino and Emanuele were all *majiosi*,

<sup>186</sup> In both the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation of Bruscas, it is not the first child that became the clan leader.

<sup>187</sup> Notice that in the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation, one of the descendants of 1<sup>st</sup> generation Giovanni Brusca *non-mafia* genealogy did join the mafia.

<sup>188</sup> Maria was the wife of Ciccio, a daily worker from Falcone. Thus, the theory of San Giovanni as the '800 Brusca village' is seemingly confirmed: the cooperatives did not manage to sideline people with '3<sup>rd</sup> degree kinship and affinity' relations with *majiosi*.

## Appendix 4

### **PROBLEMS WITHIN THE CONSORTIUM: A DOCUMENT DISMISSING ROCCA'S MAYOR FOR SUSPICIONS OF MAFIA CONDUCT [IN ITALIAN]**

#### **Il Presidente del Consorzio**

##### **PREMESSO CHE:**

nel territorio della provincia di Palermo, e precisamente nel comprensorio dell'Alto Belice Corleonese, a seguito dell'emissione, da parte dell'Autorità giudiziaria, ex art. 2 nonies della Legge 575/65, di provvedimenti definitivi di confisca di beni intestati a esponenti della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso, e della loro successiva assegnazione ai Comuni di Corleone, Monreale, Piana degli Albanesi, San Cipirello e San Giuseppe Jato, si è determinata l'esigenza di un loro utilizzo, in modo produttivo a fini sociali, con l'obiettivo di creare nuove opportunità occupazionali;

che i Sindaci di Corleone, Monreale, Piana degli Albanesi, San Cipirello e San Giuseppe Jato, su iniziativa del Prefetto di Palermo, hanno costituito, ai sensi dell'articolo 31 del D. Lgs. N° 267/2000, un Consorzio, denominato "Sviluppo e Legalità", dotato di autonomia gestionale e di personalità giuridica di diritto pubblico, per gestire, mediante l'affidamento in concessione a titolo gratuito a cooperative sociali, di cui alla legge n. 381/1991, il complesso dei terreni agricoli e fabbricati rurali confiscati, che i Comuni assegnatari hanno conferito e che conferiranno in godimento allo stesso modo a mano a mano che lo Stato li assegnerà loro;

che in data 23 Luglio 2002 hanno aderito al Consorzio Sviluppo e Legalità anche i Comuni di Altofonte, Camporeale e Rocca;

che nelle elezioni amministrative del 25 26 Maggio 2004 è stato eletto nuovo Sindaco di Rocca Giuseppe Gambino che è divenuto conseguentemente componente dell'Assemblea consortile

**che da notizie giornalistiche, confermate dalle Autorità, si è appreso che in data odierna è stato tratto in arresto il Sindaco di Rocca Giuseppe Gambino e tra i capi di accusa a carico dello stesso vi è il concorso in associazione mafiosa e il possesso abusivo di arma da fuoco;**

che da quanto emerso dalle notizie di stampa parrebbe che cosa nostra abbia condizionato in questi ultimi anni la vita politica e amministrativa del Comune di Rocca;

Ritenuto alla luce dell'arresto, delle motivazioni e dei capi di imputazione a carico del Sindaco di Rocca sospendere immediatamente dalla carica di componente dell'Assemblea consortile il Sindaco di Rocca Giuseppe Gambino fino a quando non verrà fatta definitiva chiarezza sulla sua posizione nell'ambito dell'inchiesta de qua;

Ritenuto altresì alla luce delle ipotesi di reato contestate e del quadro accusatorio che emerge sospendere qualsiasi rappresentanza del Comune di Rocca all'interno dell'Ente fino a che non vengano adottate dalle Autorità le misure previste dalla legge a tutela della Municipalità contro i condizionamenti della vita amministrativa da parte della criminalità organizzata;

Ritenuto comunque continuare a portare avanti l'azione del Consorzio anche nel territorio del Comune di Rocca ;

#### **propone di deliberare**

per le motivazioni di cui in premessa,

di sospendere immediatamente dalla carica di componente dell'Assemblea consortile il Sindaco di Rocca Giuseppe Gambino fino a quando non verrà fatta definitiva

chiarezza sulla sua posizione nell'ambito dell'inchiesta de qua;

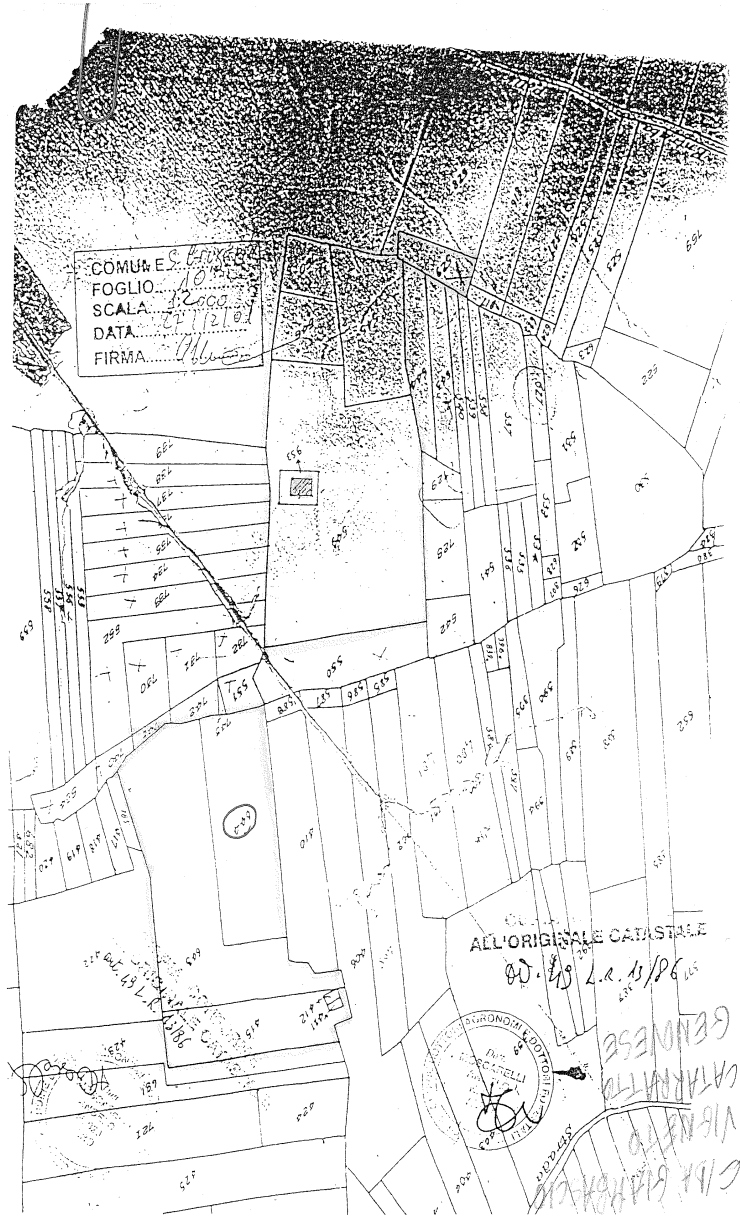
**di sospendere qualsiasi rappresentanza del Comune di Rocca all'interno dell'Ente fino a che non vengano adottate dalle Autorità le misure previste dalla legge a tutela della Municipalità contro i condizionamenti della vita amministrativa da parte della criminalità organizzata;**

di dare all'atto immediata eseguibilità

## Appendix 5

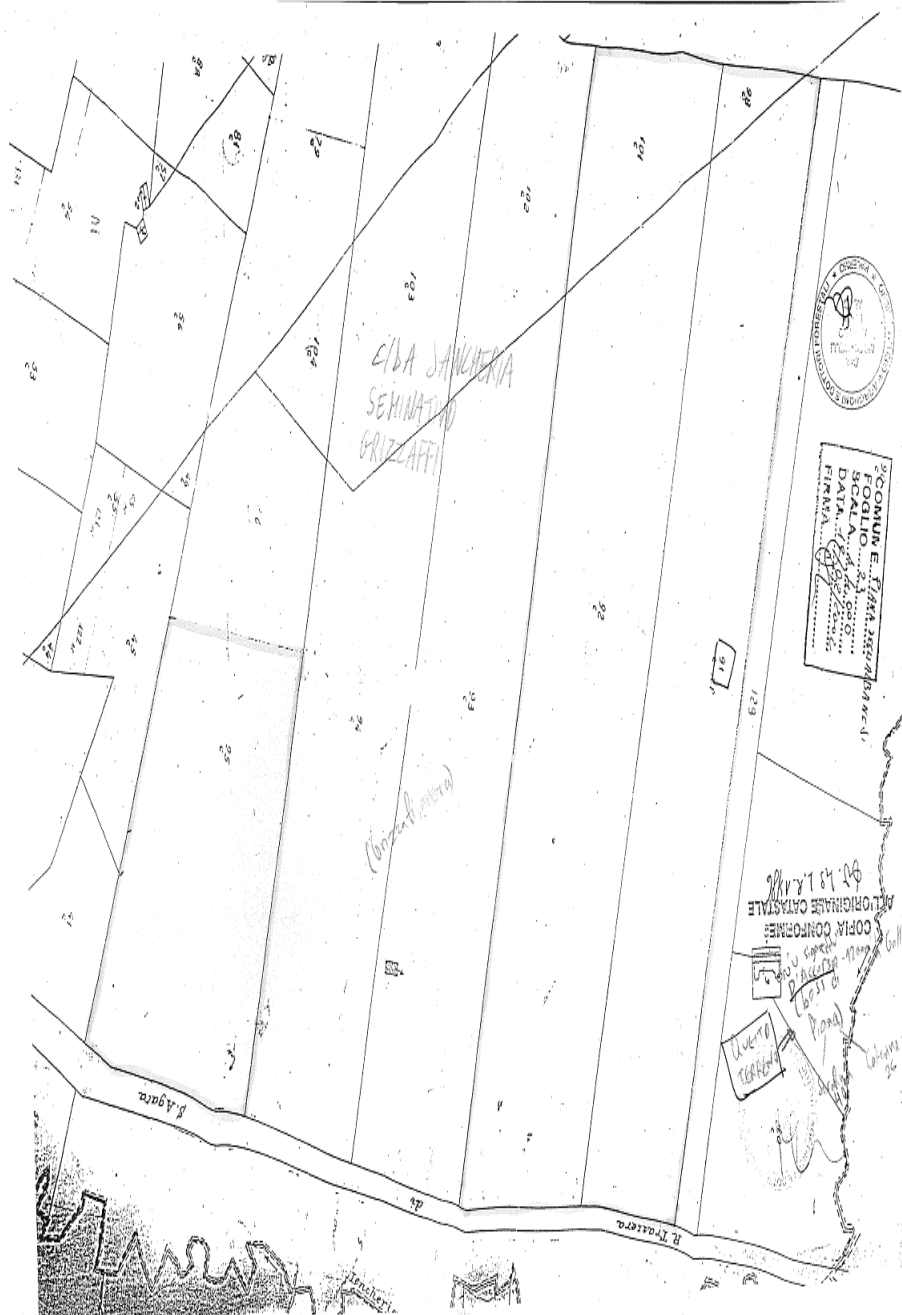
### MAPS OF CONFISCATED PLOTS FROM THE CADASTER

#### MAP I



Ginestra area. The plot used by Falcone is noted with a circle. It was confiscated from Genovese. Piero's handwriting indicates the name of the plot and the cultivation type (Catarratto: a white vine variety). The plot's ownership passed from Genovese to the San Cipirello municipality after its confiscation.

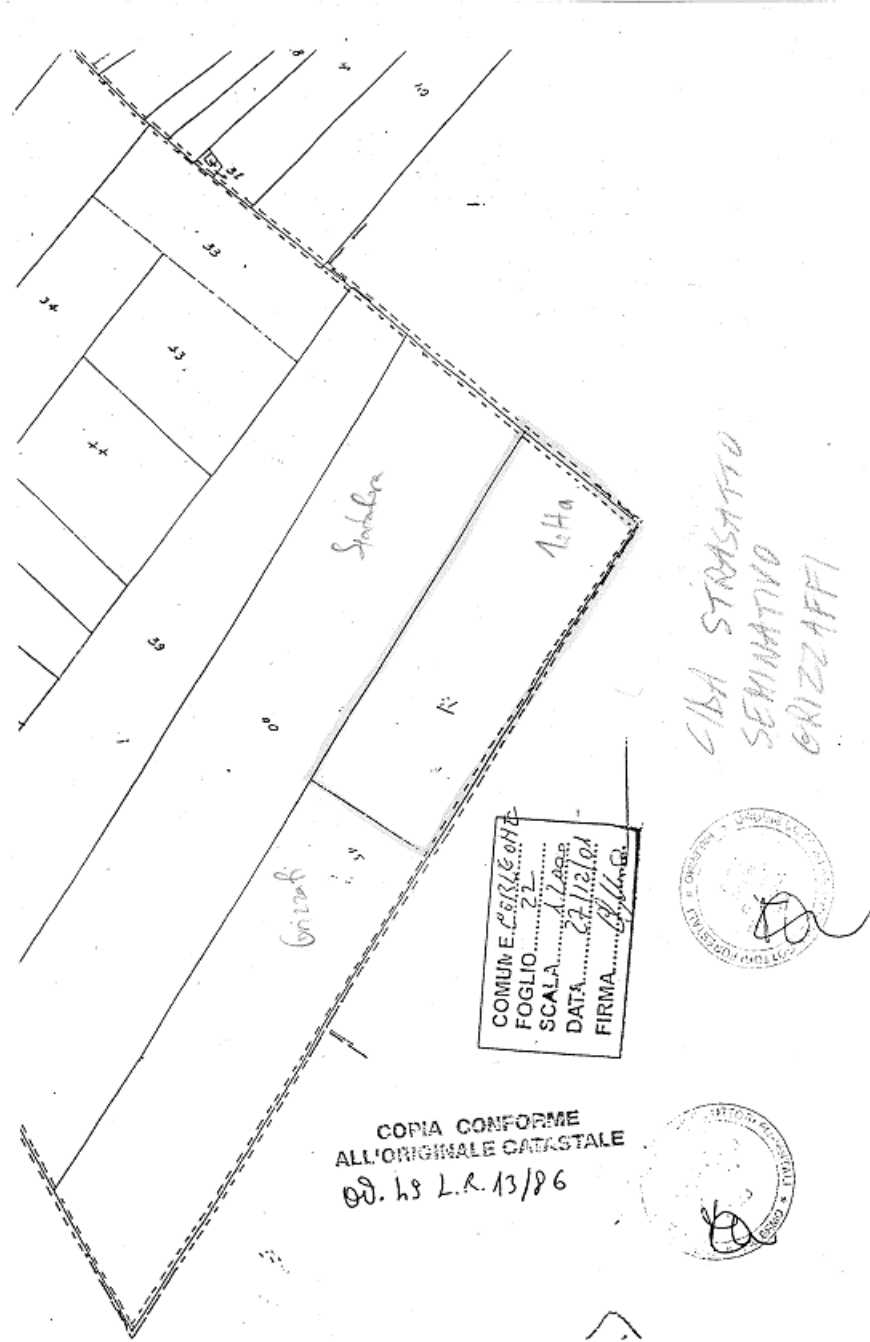
## MAP II



Jancheria area. The plot is noted with an oblong. It was confiscated from Grizzaffi, a *mafioso* from Corleone. Piero's handwriting indicates the name of the plot and the cultivation type (wheat), as well as an 'uncomfortable neighbour' in detail below on the right: there, he notes yet another confiscated plot, this time from Corso. As elaborated in section 6.2.1, there is one confiscated plot that used to belong to Corso and one *familiare* that still belongs to him (managed by his daughters). Piero's own private tiny plot is also located in the area around the confiscated Corso plot, indicated on the map as a roughly rectangular shape that reads 'QUESTO TERRENO': 'this plot' (Piero is particularly fond of it and wanted to spell it out clearly).

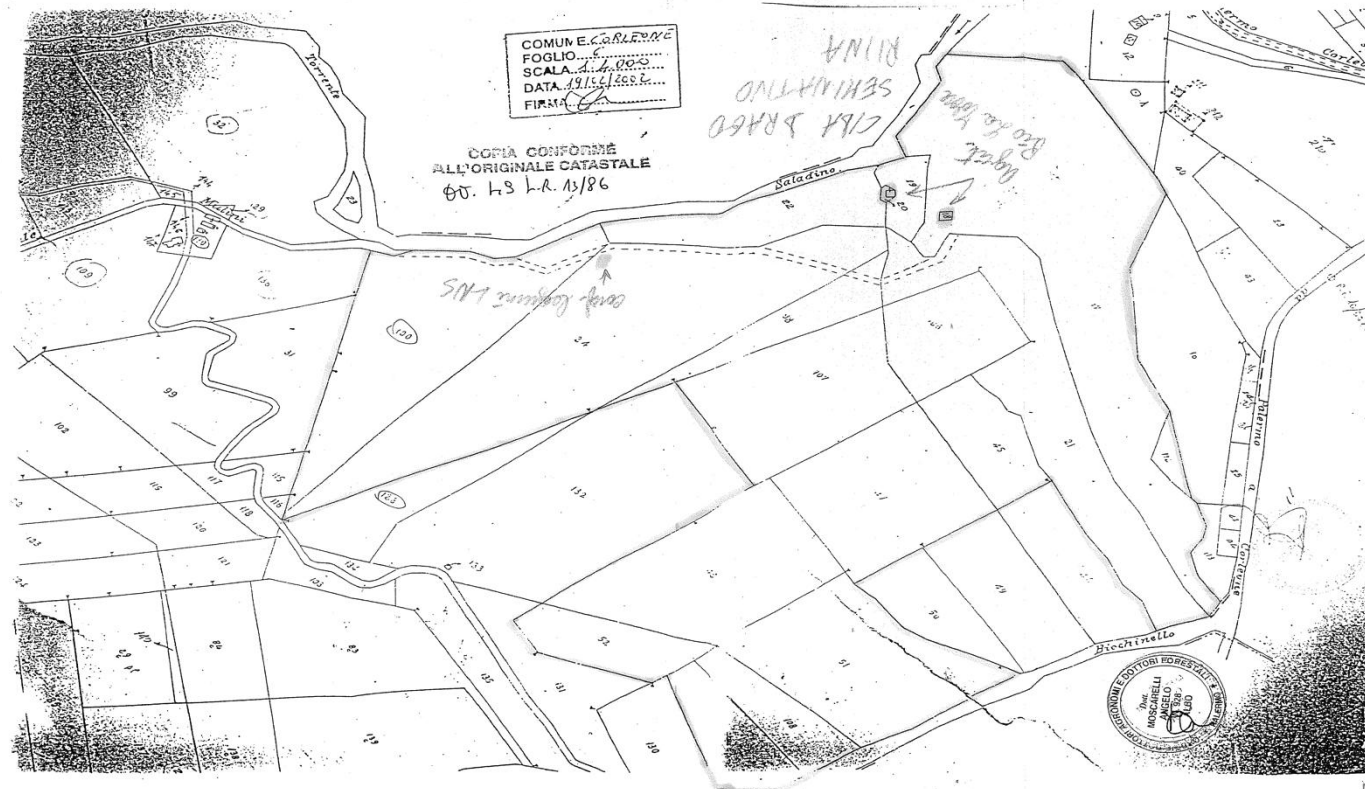


**MAP III**



Strassato area. The plot used by the coop Falcone is noted with a number indicating its size (1.5 ha); it was confiscated from Grizzaffi. Piero's handwriting indicates the name of the plot and the cultivation type, as well as two 'uncomfortable neighbours', as the plot Falcone uses is bordering Spatafora's and Grizzaffi's *familiare* plots: the two *mafiosi* are related and hence have *familiari* plots side by side, inherited by each one individually.

# MAP IV



Drago Estate: Piero's handwriting indicates the land tract now in use by the Falcone cooperative, where in 1947 Placido Rizzotto gave a speech to the amassed *braccianti*, during the massive land occupation of the surrounding latifundo (which then covered this whole map). The cooperative members are particularly proud for this, as Piero puts it, 'symbolic continuity with the antimafia movement'.

## Appendix 6

### FALCONE'S YEAR'S BALANCES

#### Giovanni Falcone – SOCIETÀ Cooperativa Sociale

Sede legale in SAN GIOVANNI (PA)

Iscritta alla C.C.I.A.A. di PALERMO - Registro Imprese di PALERMO n. 231599

Partita IVA e Codice Fiscale: 05040580820

Iscritta nell'Albo Nazionale delle società cooperative al n. A146285

Sezione: Cooperative a mutualità prevalente di diritto – Categoria: Cooperative sociali

Balance closed at 31 December 2008

(Figures in euros)

Statement of assets	31/12/2 008	31/12/ 2007
<b>A) Receivables from members for contributions due</b>	1.441	3.050
<b>B) Fixed assets</b>		

*I. Immaterial*

3) Industrial patents and intellectual property rights		3.626	1.908
1) Concessions, licences, trademarks and similar rights		1.509	751
2) Other		226.169	90.529
		<hr/>	<hr/>
		231.304	93.188
<i>II. Material</i>			
2) Plant and Machinery		693.030	112.138
3) Industrial and commercial equipment		102.129	67.054
4) Other assets		23.548	29.528
5) Assets under development and advances			105.000
		<hr/>	<hr/>
		818.707	313.720
<i>III. Financial</i>			
1) Participation in:			
b) Associated companies	47.000		
d) Other companies	5.777		37.254
		<hr/>	<hr/>
		52.777	37.254
-		52.777	37.254
<b>Total fixed assets</b>		<b>1.102.788</b>	<b>444.162</b>

## C) Current assets

### I. Materials

1) Raw materials and ancillary materials and consumables	88.115	32.320
2) Products in the process of elaboration	86.126	23.462
3) Finished products	10.380	8.556
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	184.621	64.338

### II. Credits

1) to clients		
- entro 12 mesi	674.819	954.568
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	674.819	954.568
3) to associated companies		
- within 12 months	322	
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	322	
5-bis) taxes receivable		
- within 12 months	96.244	642
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	96.244	642

6)	to others		
	- within 12 months	2.469	3.100
	- within 12 months	7.546	443
		<hr/>	<hr/>
		10.015	3.543
		<hr/>	<hr/>
		781.400	958.753
6)	Other titles	20.000	20.000
		<hr/>	<hr/>
		20.000	20.000
<i>IV.</i>	<i>cash</i>		
1)	bank and post-office deposits	720.694	256.723
3)	moneys and value in cash	3.273	3.697
		<hr/>	<hr/>
		723.967	260.420
	<b><i>Total current assets</i></b>	<b>1.709.988</b>	<b>1.303.511</b>

## **D) Accrued income and prepaid expenses**

- loans

		5.687		3.090
			5.687	3.090
<b>Active total</b>			<b>2.819.904</b>	<b>1.753.813</b>
<b>Balance Sheet Liabilities</b>				
		<b>08</b>	<b>31/12/20</b>	<b>31/12/</b>
			<b>2007</b>	
<b>A) Net Worth</b>				
I.	<i>Capital</i>		153.801	125.828
II.	<i>share premium reserves</i>			
III.	<i>revaluation reserves</i>			
IV.	<i>legal reserves</i>		103.250	78.395
V.	<i>statutory reserves</i>		181.752	22.124
VI.	<i>treasury share reserves</i>			

	<i>VII. Altre riserve</i>			
		Reserve according to art.12 L.904/77		105.562
(law		Riserve from concessional contributions	115.448	115.448
		576/1975)		
			115.446	221.010
	IX	Profit	91.489	50.840
		<b><i>Total Net Patrimony</i></b>	<b>645.738</b>	<b>498.197</b>
	<b>B)</b>	<b>Provisions for risks and charges</b>		
			157.076	159.376
		<b><i>Total provision for risks and charges</i></b>	<b>157.076</b>	<b>159.376</b>
<b>C)</b>		<b>Post-employment benefits</b>	15.947	9.679
	<b>D)</b>	<b>Debts</b>		
	4)	to banks		



	- within 12 months	45.441		
	- beyond 12 months	435.683		100.000
		<hr/>	481.124	<hr/> 100.000
5)	to others			
	- within 12 months	30.000		
	- beyond 12 months	65.540		111.080
		<hr/>	95.540	<hr/> 111.080
6)	Accounts			
	- within 12 months	100		
		<hr/>	100	<hr/>
7)	To suppliers			
	- within 12 months	837.380		694.406
		<hr/>	837.380	<hr/> 694.406
12)	Debiti tributari			
	- within 12 months	10.543		9.864
		<hr/>	10.543	<hr/> 9.864
13)	Debts towards social care institutons			

- within 12 months	15.348		6.077
		15.348	6.077
15) to members			
- within 12 months	21.548		62.979
		21.548	62.979
16) other debts			
- within 12 months	114.091		39.905
		114.091	39.905
<b>Total debts</b>		<b>1.575.674</b>	<b>1.024.311</b>
<b>E) Severance indemnities</b>			
	425.469		62.250
		425.469	62.250
<b>Passive Total</b>		<b>2.819.904</b>	<b>1.753.813</b>
<b>Memorandum accounts</b>		<b>31/12/200</b>	<b>31/12/</b>
	<b>8</b>	<b>2007</b>	

		2.907.853	3.243.573
<b>Total memorandum accounts</b>		<b>2.907.853</b>	<b>3.243.57</b>
			3
<b>Income statement</b>		<b>31/12/20</b>	<b>31/12/2</b>
	<b>08</b>	<b>007</b>	
<b>A) Value of production</b>			
1)	<i>Revenue from sales and services</i>	1.988.841	1.705.427
2)	<i>Changes in inventories of finished goods</i>	54.108	11.581
3)	<i>other revenues and income</i>		
	- various	3.318	6.165
	- operating grants	77.613	82.398
	- capital contributions	8.387	
		<hr/>	<hr/>
		89.318	88.563

<b>Total cost of production<sup>189</sup></b>		<b>2.132.267</b>	<b>1.805.571</b>
<b>B)</b>	<b>Costs of production</b>		
6)	<i>for raw and ancillary materials, consumables</i>	1.163.155	1.034.945
7)	<i>for services</i>	332.860	300.265
8)	<i>for others</i>	30.196	3.376
9)	<i>for the members<sup>190</sup></i>		

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<sup>189</sup> To compare for example with Lavoro e Altro:

**B TOTAL COSTS OF PRODUCTION**

467.516                      386.430

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<sup>190</sup> To compare with Lavoro e Altro:

wages 138.388 social security charges: 13.561 employees severance indemnities 8.607

	a)	wages	358.105		303.096
	b)	social security charges	50.433		41.520
	c)	employee severance indemnities	11.055		11.855
	d)	other costs			
				<hr/>	<hr/>
				419.593	356.471
	<i>10) Depreciation, amortization and impairments</i>				
Fixed assets	a)	Ammortamento delle immateriali	17.913		11.699
Fixed assets	b)	Ammortamento delle materiali	49.174		45.082
Fixed assets	c)	Altre svalutazioni delle azioni			
Fixed assets	d)	Provisions for potential losses	3.462		4.751
				<hr/>	<hr/>
				70.549	61.532
	<i>11) Changes in inventories of raw materials, consumables and goods</i>				
				(66.175)	2.674
	<i>12) other management expenses</i>				
				32.986	11.309

TOTAL PRODUCTION COSTS	1.983.164	1.770.572
Difference between cost and value of production (A-B)	149.103	34.999
23) Profit <sup>191</sup>	91.489	50.840

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<sup>191</sup> To compare with Lavoro e Altro:

**23) PROFIT**

23.425                      92.020

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## Appendix 7

### MAP OF CONFISCATED ASSETS IN ITALY (2009)

84% of confiscated assets are in the four southern regions. Sicily is first in Italy by far, as 47% of all Italian confiscated assets are located there. This proves the efficiency of the antimafia movement and especially the state antimafia interventionism in Sicily, as mafias in other parts of Italy are equally strong as Cosa Nostra, but have suffered fewer confiscations to their assets: Calabria and Campania 15% each, Puglia at 7%. The remaining 16% is mainly located in Lombardy and in Lazio.