## The mafia psychology and the coexistence systems

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#### **Abstract**

One of the main objectives of this paper is the analysis of the systems that allowed the coexistence of three most important, well-known and widespread Italian mafia organizations, on national and international territories, namely: Cosa Nostra, 'ndrangheta and camorra. First of all, we will introduce the theoretical framework, which is focused on social coexistence (Carli, 2000a, 2000b) and on socialorganizational coexistence (Gozzoli, 2014). Secondly, this article will propose a reading of the mafia organizations coexistence phenomena in Sicily, Calabria, Campania and Lombardy, mainly focusing on the structure of thought and on their relational approach towards the Other. Interestingly, the analysis revealed a profound difference between mafia organizations' relational approach when in their homeland and when in "conquered" territories: in their homeland they subject the population through fear, there is no need for further investments, as it is recognized by people, and above all, the concept of mafia is psycho-anthropo-culturally established and part of the community structure itself. By contrast, in conquered territories, mafia organizations invest, they do business, they carry out lawful activities and are involved with influential people in finance. On the other hand, Lombardy's communities often have a dangerous type of relationship with mafia, known as "fundamentalist": criminals are seen as "disposable", an object to be used. For this reason, in the final part of the work, we developed a plan to promote a generative coexistence in territories where coexistence is currently impossible and destructive, that is wherever mafia organizations have set up and required a code of silence from people. The final aim is to create the most hostile ground possible for the mafia, to create a "socio-relational and economic desertification of criminal organizations", and build awareness in professionals (e.g., entrepreneurs, artisans, etc.) and non-professionals (i.e., communities) that coming to terms with organized crime is far from economically viable and, indeed, deadly.

Key words: mafia; coexistence; fundamentalism.

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#### Introduction

Psychology of coexistence studies the relationship between the individual (as composed by a psyche, emotions and thoughts), the environment (dynamic and flexible) and the Other (also composed by a psyche, personal emotions and thoughts). The unification of the individual and the organizational realities is overcome, and they are now considered interdependent (Di Maria & Lavanco, 1994). According to psychology of coexistence, the acceptance of the Other is made possible by creating new poleis, meaning places where people can meet, and building authentic relationships based on a Me-You relation, meaning recognizing an existing dissimilarity as a subjectivity, (i.e., You), and not as an object (that would be It; Buber, 1993; Di Maria & Lavanco, 1994).

# Theoretical background Renzo Carli's theoretical model

Renzo Carli (2000a, 2000b) theorized the concept of coexistence, and defined it as the symbolic component (conceived as a *linking* together process) of social relationships, regulated by three key elements: the system of belonging (the relationship's symbolic dimension, solely based on the affective symbolization of the other), the stranger, identified by the term the Other that describes whoever is external to the system of belonging, and the game rules (that describes the way in which the system of belonging opens to the extraneous). There are also three types of violation of coexistence: a rules of the game violation, when the existence of a system of rules shared by both parties is not taken into account. A second violation to coexistence is the negation of the stranger: the other is not recognized or accepted in its differences and is considered a non-person. The third violation is the negation of the system of belonging: one's own origins, bonds and affective symbolic relationships are completely ignored (Carli, 2000a, 2000b).

## Socio-organizational coexistence: Caterina Gozzoli's model

Gozzoli (2014) reinterpreted Carli's model according to "dialogic-interpersonal-cultural" perspective, in which the relationship is considered as the constitutive and unconscious element of exchange between subjects (Bion, 1961; Fornari, 1987; Cigoli, 2002). Furthermore, the relationship's existence is prior to the exchange, and is endowed with deeper and unconscious meanings (Morin, 1974; Hinde, 1987; Cigoli, 2002). Therefore, organizational coexistence is considered a "relational intertwining" between identity, otherness, organizational diversity culture and the work's objective. The latter is seen the element that allows identity and otherness to meet and clash, which is possible within an organizational culture able to handle diversity and conflict. The author presented several types of coexistence, among which affiliated coexistence, chaotic-confused coexistence, performing coexistence and generative coexistence

# Mafia organizations and coexistence: psychologial studies

When talking about troublesome coexistences, mafia organizations cannot be left uncited. Over the years, research contributions regarding the relationship between coexistence and mafia organizations have been growing. The outcomes provided a deeper knowledge about social coexistence processes activated by criminal organizations, both in their homelands and in their settlement territories, and about the peculiar socio-organizational structure typical of the most important mafia organizations, such as 'ndrangheta, Cosa Nostra and camorra.

## Social coexistence with mafia in their homeland<sup>1</sup>

#### 'Ndrangheta in Calabria

To date, 'ndrangheta is the most powerful of mafia organizations, and the rule of silence and power allowed them to take over and colonize new territories. The Calabrian mafia is liquid, it adapts to all contexts without ever changing its criminal profile based on archaic laws and fellowship: it makes of "secrets" its own criminal mantra (Giorgi, Gozzoli, & Lampasona, 2014; Coppola & Formica, 2014).

In Calabrian communities, mafia plays a unique role, as it is present, but transparent, dark, and unspoken. It's there, you can feel it, but it is not manifest, it does not invest, and it does not launder money in their homeland. On the other hand, citizens react with defensive mechanisms, such as dissociation or retroactive annulment or, for example, victims have to deal with a devastating and destabilizing world (Coppola & Formica, 2014).

This criminal organization, like all others, does not recognize the Other or see the Other as endowed with knowledge as to build new negotiated ideas. On the contrary, it uses a fundamentalist and familial system of belonging (i.e., the familial bond is a bond of blood which coincides with the bond of belonging to a mafia organization) to relate to the Other: the stranger is a mere tool to achieve their goals and the use of violence with entrepreneurs and local communities is yet unseen in other mafias. The underlying rules in social coexistence are based on the subjection and imposition of silence and secrecy: anyone who refuses to obey or to pay extortion will receive threat letters and phone calls, suffer arson, and in worst cases receive kidnap threats regarding other family member (or the victims themselves) (Giorgi, Gozzoli & Lampasona, 2014; Coppola & Formi-

<sup>1</sup>Further reading: Di Blasi, Cavani, La Grutta, Lo Baido, & Pavia (2014).

ca, 2014; Nicaso, 2016; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2016).

#### Cosa Nostra in Sicily

In Sicily, the hierarchical structure of Cosa Nostra is no longer so rigid, but it is distributed into parallel gangs and in different businesses: the task of the senior "bosses" is to exercise leadership and keep peace among the different families. In fact, Sicilian mafia organization's neophytes are oriented towards business, high finance and economy, have a stronger education compared to their "ancestors" and more sophisticated relational and communication skills. The main criminal activities regard waste recycling, money laundering, extortion, gambling, drug trafficking (in collaboration with 'ndrangheta and camorra), but also the agricultural sector, the industrial and tertiary sector, (Lo Verso, 2013; 2015; Giordano & Lo Verso, 2014). Cosa Nostra takes part to local policy, does business with public administrators, requires with building contractors for business participation in their activities: it administers the political-social agenda of Sicilian communities, destroying any opportunity of economic growth. In addition, public health and safety are undermined: the Other, as conceptualized by Renzo Carli's perspective, is denied and exploited because the only way to read the world is according to the Fundamentalist system of belonging (Carli, 2000). Cosa Nostra imposes itself with social rules of coexistence that correspond to their own living rules: rule of silence, subjection, and submission. An extortion is carried out in a very specific and highly recognizable way, without the use of explicit violence: this mafia organization uses codes and psychoanthropologically rooted behaviors. Interestingly, the way in which mafia organization members relate to the Other is immediately recognizable and associated with the mafia organization itself. Violence is used when the victim refuses to submit to the imposed "pacts", a sort of extrema ratio: superglue in

door locks, threats and so on. By conse-

quence, Sicilian's culture of "honor" and "respect" is completely distorted in favor of a criminal point of view, thus mafia organizations become increasingly entrenched in the system, careless towards the environment and local sicilian communities. Mafia organizations' final goal is to extend their power, increase their capital and territorial hegemony (Scarpinato, 1998; Falcone & Padovani, 1991; Lo Verso, 1998; 2013; 2015; Giunta & Lo Verso, 2012, Giordano & Lo Verso, 2014).

### Camorra in Campania

According to Carli's model (2000a; 2000b), camorra can be seen as a self-referential system, based on its own system of belonging, that refuses to see the Other as a bearer of diversity in subjectivity, action and thought (Di Maria, 2000). Camorra's identity is rooted in social structure, where it originated from, and is able to lead the social system to consider it as a valid alternative to the legal system, to be recognized and sometimes also appreciated (Di Fiore, 2005; Ravveduto, 2006; Saviano, 2006; Barbagallo, 2010). At the same time the social system, the Other, struggles in conceiving the "harmfulness" of making a criminal system such as camorra acceptable: clans, overwhelmingly, abuse of the territories they inhabit, drain them, cut down spaces granted to others and require a continuous psychological submission.

Camorra conceives the otherness as homologated to camorra itself, subjected, and uses it in a deceptive way to obtain familial advantages. It is indeed culturally conceived to do business and create affiliates: either you are part of the system and become a means for money and power, that is the criminal organization's goal, or, if you choose to stay out of it, you may receive physical and psychological violence (De Rosa, 2011, 2016; De Rosa & Ravveduto, 2013). The worst scenario consists in the violation of camorra's rules of the game, such as pressing charges or collaborating with law enforcement: in this case the individual could be re-

pudiated by the family of origin or may incur slanders or death condemnation.

Therefore, the relationships that camorra establishes are transitory, meaning it develops "utilitarian" bonds that can be destroyed in a short time: it is here that we find the strongest conflicts between different camorra groups, the so-called blood feuds, through which both clans exercise their power. Notably, camorra is constantly in conflict with institutions, viewing the State as the enemy to fight and using justice collaborators as a means to destroy the organization and its business: this attitude is introjected also by society which justifies camorra's behavior as the State is seen as absent and indifferent (Di Fiore, 2005; Sales & Ravveduto, 2006; Saviano, 2006; Barbagallo, 2010; De Rosa, 2011, 2016; De Rosa & Ravveduto, 2013).

In light of the above, camorra is attributable to a destructive social coexistence that leads to devastation and demolition, where otherness is denied, the system of belonging is fixed and the rules of the game are self-referenced.

Not only is the Other denied, but it is also feared, as clan members "militarily" defend" the controlled territories which, in some cases, leads to strong conflicts between camorra gangs (Carli, 2000a, 2000b).

One aspect that extends to all the mafia organizations is related to mafia victims: for example, victims like traders and entrepreneurs, are to be considered as the Other, the subjugated, used for utilitarian and criminal purposes (Di Maria, 2000).

# Coexisting with mafia organizations in Lombardy

Sicilian mafia and the mafias from Calabria and Campania made it to Lombardy in the 50s, establishing their total dominance in the territory, unchallenged to this day. At the beginning of the 90s, Cosa Nostra suffered significant setbacks, as the institutions pushed back after the attacks at Capaci and via D'Amelio. And yet, several mafia groups are present in the region, in particular in the

province of Milan, Brescia, Cremona e Bergamo<sup>2</sup> (Meneghetti & Prandini, 2015).

The mafia in the north of Italy adopts a unique, non-violent technique, which consists in large capital gains with the lowest of production costs: mafia knowhow is cherished by many business people and elected representatives. Mafia targets are the finance sector (with the help of white collar workers and corrupt officials), investments in banks and gambling. As a result, society experiences a lack of growth, stunted social development and a decrease of the wealth available to the community. The Lombardy mafia will not shoot, instead it strikes important financial and political deals (Portanova, Rossi & Stefanoni, 1996; Chiavari, 2011; Belloni, 2012; Dalla Chiesa & Panzarasa, 2012; Gozzoli, D'Angelo & Giorgi, 2012; Giorgi, Gozzoli & Lampasona, 2014; Meneghetti & Prandini, 2015; Dalla Chiesa & Panzarasa, 2012; Nicaso, 2016; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2016).

Unlike the forced coexistence typical of the south, in Lombardy we detect a conscious willingness to "come to terms" with the mafioso (i.e., a mafia affiliate), in which the alliance between white collar workers and the mafia are symptomatic of a totally different strategy, diverging from the "cap and sawnoff shotgun" way: shootings and killings are not as lucrative as doing big deals, recycling funds in legal enterprises, infiltrate and win public procurements and open new companies, activities that can eventually lead to hegemony in the territory, power and money (Portanova, Rossi & Stefanoni, 1996; Chiavari, 2011; Belloni, 2012; Dalla Chiesa & Panzarasa, 2012; Gozzoli, D'Angelo & Giorgi, 2012; Giorgi, Gozzoli & Lampasona, 2014; Meneghetti & Prandini, 2015; Dalla Chiesa & Panzarasa, 2012; Nicaso, 2016; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2016).

It seems that the Lombardy business community and people at large relate to the mafi-

<sup>2</sup>Further reading: http://www.wikimafia.it/wiki/index.php?title=Categoria:Lombardia

oso by denying his nature: they don't recognise it as a mafioso, but as a common criminal. The mafioso is considered disposable, "I can deal with the mafia, increase my profits and get rid of it the next day". Unfortunately, nothing could be farther from the truth: once inside the system, the mafia will be extremely difficult to expel and in many cases it might gain control of the enterprise (Portanova, Rossi & Stefanoni, 1996; Chiavari, 2011; Belloni, 2012; Dalla Chiesa & Panzarasa, 2012; Gozzoli, D'Angelo & Giorgi, 2012; Giorgi, Gozzoli & Lampasona, 2014; Meneghetti & Prandini, 2015; Dalla Chiesa & Panzarasa, 2012; Nicaso, 2016; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2016). The mafia is there, present, completely different from the common stereotypes: white collar workers, big finance, entrepreneurs, cash, high circles, high social skills. A perfect criminal mix that causes untold damage to local communities and the economy in Lombardy. The rules of the game on which the relationship between mafia and entrepreneurs is based are all to do with money, public procurements, recycling, relations with businesses, on cash (Portanova, Rossi & Stefanoni, 1996; Chiavari, 2011; Belloni, 2012; Dalla Chiesa & Panzarasa, 2012; Gozzoli, D'Angelo & Giorgi, 2012; Giorgi, Gozzoli & Lampasona, 2014; Meneghetti & Prandini, 2015; Dalla Chiesa & Panzarasa, 2012; Nicaso, 2016; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2016).

The move from south to north drastically changed the type of coexistence that came into being: mafia originates in the south, it carries distinctively southern psychoanthropological characters, its nature is in the way in which it lives and breathes; in the south, it manages the territory with archaic means, long forgotten elsewhere, and cooperates with politicians. The subjugation and conspiracy of silence are an integral part of the destructive pattern created by Cosa Nostra, 'ndrangheta and camorra: people become aware of the presence of mafia and they use denial as a defence against distress and fear for one's life.

The mafia adapted its methods and principles to the traditional values of Lombardy, mainly a business oriented culture: the rules of the game (Carli, 2000a; 2000b) are set to take advantage of the wealth of the north, significantly larger in comparison to the wealth of Sicily, Calabria and Campania or any other southern region, and to tap into the possible gains coming from recycling activities and other borderline operations. We could define this kind of coexistence as business baseddestructive considering that, along with the rules of the game dictated by cash, the mafioso denies the Other (the community and the individual) and tries to use it as a tool to increase power and influence in a truly fundamentalist mafia way; conversely, the Other would seems to focus on the fundamentalism based on the denial of the other as a mafioso: as a consequence, the business person considers the mafia as a criminal system one can deal with and can invest on. Business communities in Lombardy continue to deny a mafia presence in their region, as they fear the phenomenon and would rather see it as peculiar to the south. Denial, typical of the north, creates more danger and more damage, it fosters and promotes the very dangerous thought "elsewhere it is mafia, here it is business".

# Social and organizational coexistences of mafia organizations

Fundamentalist mafia organizations: Cosa Nostra and 'ndrangheta

Gozzoli's socio-organizational coexistence model (2014) can be applied to analyze the organization of Cosa Nostra and that of 'ndrangheta. The affiliate's identity appears to be completely overlapping with the overpersonal identity of the organization. *I* coincides with *Us*, they are the same thing. Fundamentally, this individual does not have a subjective identity, but is unconsciously conceived and trained by the organization; this leads to an adhesive and depersonalizing identification with a supra-individual entity that annuls the identity *I*, and replaces it with the identity *Us*. The feeling of belonging to

the organization also guarantees a sense of protection.

Identity is therefore affiliative and homologating, with a total absence of differentiation among peers at the hierarchical level. Indeed mafia organizations do not allow freedom of thought or action for the individuals involved, and entry into the organization becomes the only possible path. Otherness is not considered as such, in its identity, needs and value; difference is seen as the personification of evil, which must be dominated and annulled. The otherness is exploited only in order to satisfy their interests and reinforce their feeling of omnipotence. As a consequence, the relationship between identity and otherness is manipulative and utilitaristic. and emotional ties are inexistent. The work's object is defined, prioritized and constantly referred to: power, possessions, money and control are mafia organizations' sole objectives, which are pursued at any cost. Conflict is absent, because every action is monitored, and freedom of thought or action are not allowed. Conflict is unthinkable because it threatens belonging.

Referring to the forms of socialorganizational coexistence, what emerges is a fundamentalist-performing type of coexistence, where the object of work and the final goal are the annulment of differences and the domination of the other. Individual power, as for identity, coincides with supra-individual power. Control - over the other, over the land of entry into the organization, over actions through recurring meetings - and submission are aspects that imply fantasies of power and possession, and certainly not of productive exchange in the encounter with the other. The "relationship" is based on the negation of the stranger, and therefore threatening coexistence (Carli & Paniccia, 2003).

### Camorra: a hybrid mafia organization

The analysis of camorra according to Gozzoli's model (2014), highlighted several interesting aspects. First of all, a "camorrista's" (i.e., a member and affiliate of camorra)

identity is given by the belonging to a clan, to a certain camorra family. Beyond that, the camorra affiliate's identity is linked to everything that he possesses, and the organizer thought is found in what one has and what one offers, power and money, that is, one's own "possessions": the achievement of a higher status and popularity are what make the work object (money and power) of the camorra organization visible to others. Every clan member makes known the belonging to one specific family and boasts about it, because being part, belonging to a certain clan perceived as powerful, increases the affiliate's social status. Social approval and the feeling of being part of a system able to conquer and offer a lot is what affiliates receive. In this view, the clan becomes the means to achieve identification with their own work object, that is money, power and luxury.

Within camorra organizations, the Other is used as a means to achieve goals, and its diversity is denied. Lest being denied by the clan, an affiliate must accepted unconditionally the object of criminal work (De Rosa, 2011, 2016; De Rosa & Ravveduto, 2013). The relationship between identity and otherness can only be unstable, manipulative, and enraged, and conflict is acted on a horizontal, peer level. There are no conflicts regarding the boss, he is not questioned because he is seen as the "savior", the one who protects his affiliates from external threats. Conflict with the boss comes into play during clan splits, that happen when affiliates detach from the group to which they belong because they no longer perceive it as able to support its members in achieving their goals (Gozzoli, 2014). In light of the above, camorra denotes an affiliative-confusing with performing traits type of social-organizational coexistence (fig.3). Otherness is denied and affiliated to the group's identity, but it is also feared: the boss uses manipulation to keep his submissives under control, in order to be considered as "powerful", "supreme" and "unreachable", which allows him both to increase his hegemony, and to use affiliates to achieve the

criminal-organizational goals (Gozzoli, 2014).

The object of work has a strong emotional connotation, which is able to affect and organize the clan's thought within an organizational culture based on the use of the other as a means for gaining more power and money. Therefore, conflict can only be acted out on a horizontal level through angry behaviors towards other fellowmen. Vertical conflicts may occur during internal splits (Gozzoli, 2014).

### **Conclusions**

In view of the above, what can be done? The answer is fostering generative coexistence, acting on two levels: on the one side, educate social workers, helping them to understand the mafia's own dynamics and the emotions it activates (thus also avoiding a second victimisation of the victims, or traumatising or victimising the social worker) (Figley, 1995; Blair & Ramones, 1996; Stamm, 1999; Bruno, 2005; Bride, 2007; Monzani & Bertoli, 2016; Monzani, Giacometti, 2016); on the other, a social channel becomes viable, a community becomes available: former mafia victims (those who followed a specific recovery path) can share their story, their emotions, their subjective experience and their suffering. They are no longer viewed as those who suffered violence, a crime or a felony: they become the symbol and bearer of an educational path, a healthy lifestyle in which the Other is valued in which the rules of the game are based on legality and the rule of law (Carli, 2000a; 2000b; Di Maria, 2000; Calandra, Giorgi, 2015).

If this is the chosen path, Carli's model could be adopted as a theoretical reference: the system of belonging should be reviewed, bringing to the fore the diversity embodied by the different former victims and their stories, within a shared system of rules based on denouncing any wrong doing and on their "voice" being heard, in territories where the mafia imposes subjugation, submission and "silence". The former victims can greatly

benefit by sharing their experience with school children, associations and organisations, as they leave behind a crippling isolation (particularly when they are part of a protection scheme); furthermore, the process of sharing would help communities (most types) realise how detrimental and economically damaging it is to be silent about the mafia (Giorgi et al., 2009; Lo Verso, Di Blasi, 2011; De Rosa, 2011; 2016; De Rosa, Ravveduto, 2013).

A re-evaluation of the rules of the game by school children could be achieved by projects centered on legality and carried out in schools; children could express and modify their psychological image of the mafia phenomenon associated with power, money and helplessness, in a *transpersonal* manner (Lo Verso, Di Blasi, 2011), and could positively assess the rules of the game (Carli, 2000a; 2000b). Within associations and organisations, the story telling by former victims could be the starting point for a discussion and promotion of new projects centered on the rule of law and social education, in the

territories where they operate. Lastly, exchanges and meetings at local level could help citizens understand and be aware that the mafia scourge is present in every town, without exceptions (Giorgi et al., 2009; Coppola et al., 2011; Calandra, Giorgi, 2015).

Former victims, in light of the above, would have an important role in bringing forward the idea of a possible alternative: their life experience is devastating and is part of a constant traumatic collective experience, in fear of mafia dynamics and code of action, which are a psycho-anthropological part of the local heritage where mafia thrives (Carli, 2000a; Lo Verso, Di Blasi, 2011; Giorgi et al., 2009, Calandra, Giorgi, 2015). We believe that there are fundamental steps to be taken to contain the impact of the presence of criminal communities within larger communities: we need to create a generative social coexistence combat to the organisational model preferred by the mafia, by "creating a desert" around the social and relational activities of the mafia itself.

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