

Chapter 5

THE SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS FOR THE STUDY OF MAFIA ASSOCIATIONS. THE ITALIAN CASE OF MAFIA CAPITALE

Raffaella GALLO¹

1. INTRODUCTION

The multidimensional character of this particular social phenomenon made in Italy has favored the proliferation of numerous theoretical-epistemological approaches in the social sciences, that highlight various aspects and suggest different ways of dealing scientifically with discourse. On the other hand, the social changes resulting from globalization, from internationalization of the economy and from incessant development of the media, have determined the restructuring of criminal organizations, which, in order to adapt to new objectives dictated by the evolution of cultural and economic models, have gradually adopted more flexible and complex reticular models, in opposition to closed organizational models and rigidly hierarchical (Castiello, 2015). As Savona explained already at the end of the 1990s, Italian crime, like the transnational crime, in recent decades is experiencing rapid and important transformations (Savona, 1998):

1. Tend to come out of the “occasional individual” or “organized-simple” dimension to enter more into the “organized-complex” dimension (ibid.);
2. Opts for the adoption of flexible reticular organizational models, capable of connecting criminal organizations with each other, with common crime and with institutions and professional consultants of the legal economy, defining stable systems of relationships among members of different organizations (white collar, entrepreneurs, professional criminals, etc.), which, aimed at reciprocal exchange of goods and services, act on the border between lawful and illicit and sometimes encroaching on the illegal (ibid.);
3. Increasingly concentrates its interests in the economic sector.

The evolution and restructuring of criminal organizational phenomena require the adoption of more sophisticated theoretical and methodological tools

¹ PhD, Rome Sapienza University, gallo.raffaella1987@gmail.com

concluding notes, it is my intention to emphasize the need to elaborate and test a methodological practice useful for the study of organized crime.

Despite the undoubted advantage in the application of the network model to the study of organized crime-an increasingly recognized fascination, which has favored the constant proliferation of the use of these techniques for the study of criminal phenomena-we must also consider a series of problems that the researcher must recognize, and when possible to contain, if he decides to apply the approach and the techniques of the SNA to the study of the mafia. The critical issues encountered are partly coincident with those relating to the network analysis generally understood: incompleteness of data, delimitation of network boundaries, the difficulty of acquiring relational data. These problems are even more evident in the study of “dark networks”, that is the networks consisting of subjects who not only act illegally but pursue their goals in a secret way (Castiello, 2015).

Nevertheless, I believe that the advantages of using the relational perspective and its tools in the study of mafia networks have, however, a greater value than the problems it presents. For this reason, we can confirm the usefulness of this approach for the study of the mafia phenomenon.

Also useful, in my opinion, is the proposal of a precise *analytical practice* that allows the comparison of different criminal groups, through the combined use of specific methodological techniques-the construction of cxv matrices for the statistical analysis of the sample, the Social Network Analysis and the tools of qualitative analysis, indispensable for a full understanding of the judicial material and for the deepening of less visible aspects to quantitative analysis (for example, the presence of a behavioral code among affiliates, the use of languages or gestures secrets able to elude the investigative activity, the real value of specific actions, etc.) and equally important to understand the value or the status of the relationships that are established between the subjects.

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