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The shared boundary: Sicilian mafia and antimafia land

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| Abstract: | <p>This essay looks at boundaries as shared points of conflict and sociality in rural Sicily where the mafia and their opponents (antimafia cooperatives) have lately been at loggerheads. My focus is on neighborly relations between mafia and antimafia owners of plots. This uncomfortable proximity of enemies allows us to see boundaries as more than markers of separation. While Sicilian boundaries recall a history of violence and divide people along categorical lines, they also reflect histories of inheritance and kinship, while providing points of contact and an unexpected moral order of neighborhood relations. A focus on borders shared between plots managed by “antagonistic” social groups exposes emergent relations of conflict and solidarity between their owners. Land boundaries can be markers of proximity and difference between opposed groups who find themselves in neighborhood. The boundary underpinning such divisions can make neighbors of feuding groups, rather than confining them to closed clusters.</p> |
| Order of Authors: | Theodoros Rakopoulos, PhD |
| Response to Reviewers: | <p>please see email to editor 9.9.2020</p> <p>note on abstract: changed accordingly</p> <p>note on title: It is my conviction that the present subtitle is evocative and adds the ethnographic flair needed for this paper. I would rather not change it, adding “holdings”; while this choice would be accurate when it comes to the real descriptive stake here, it might reduce some of the broader reflection pertaining to land’s attributes that the paper suggests. I am open to editorial suggestions on this matter.</p> <p>pages 2, 3: all four points addressed – revisions made.</p> <p>page 4: added footnote for first point, amended paragraph for second point, changed verb tense for third point.</p> <p>page 6: changed</p> <p>page 7: all three points addressed</p> <p>page 8: not changed; the word “bunkers” is factually correct, as Giovanni Brusca lived in a bunker he had made for himself.</p> <p>page 19: I would rather not change “additionally” to “ironically” as the change might suggest a slight shift in focus.</p> <p>page 23: I think the change suggested would shift the meaning of the phrase. I amended it to make it clearer.</p> <p>page 25: changed</p> |

Abstract [200w]

This essay looks at boundaries as shared points of conflict and sociality in rural Sicily where the mafia and their opponents ('antimafia' cooperatives) have lately been at loggerheads. My focus is on neighborly relations between owners of plots on both sides. This uncomfortable proximity of enemies allows us to see boundaries as more than markers of separation. For sure, Sicilian boundaries imprint a history of violence on the landscape and divide people along categorical lines. However, they also reflect histories of inheritance and kinship, while providing points of contact and an unexpected moral order of neighborhood relations. A focus on borders shared between plots managed by "antagonistic" social groups exposes emergent relations of conflict and solidarity between their owners. Land boundaries can be markers of proximity and difference between opposed groups who find themselves owning plots next to each other. The boundary underpinning such divisions can make neighbors of feuding groups, rather than confining them to closed clusters.

Keywords

Sicily, mafia, 'antimafia', neighborhood, land, proximity

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The shared boundary: Sicilian mafia and antimafia land

Introduction

The place

Although most of their revenue comes from racketeering and the illegal trade in drugs, many Sicilian mafiosi have been landowners for three or four generations (Blok 1988; Santino 2007). In Palermo's hinterland, the mafia families in Spicco Vallata¹ held large tracts of land divided into a number of plots (Lupo 2011). Many were confiscated during the 2000s for having been acquired illegally and were eventually transferred to 'antimafia' cooperatives as part of a joint government and civil society effort to counteract mafia power (Schneider and Schneider 2005). Since the mid-1990s, Sicilian officials, civil society activists, and agricultural cooperatives have led the transfer 'back to the community' of land confiscated from the mafia. This has much reduced mafia dominance of land ownership (Barbieri 2005: 87; Frigerio and Pati 2006: 15).

The antimafia co-op project seeks to end mafia injustice by giving their land to cooperatives (Libera 2010). Many co-op members ended up sharing borders with mafiosi who still cultivated neighboring plots (their 'family' land) that had not been confiscated. This constitutes an interesting case study of landowners who are nominal enemies but are nevertheless forced to work in close proximity. State expropriation of mafia lands may weaken the mafia, but it does

¹ All names of places and people are pseudonyms. The few exceptions are very public figures, like the mafioso Salvatore Riina.

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3
4 not erase the complicated communal and kin ties that mark relations between
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6 mafia and antimafia families. Rather, both groups have been brought physically
7
8 closer than ever. The creation of antimafia cooperatives makes the connections
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10 between the two sides and the grey space between them more visible (Rakopoulos
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12 2018, Pine 2015).
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16 Focusing on this paradox, I here discuss the unexpected confusion created
17
18 by land reallocation in a Sicilian valley. I focus on the contiguity between plots of
19
20 land registered under different statuses and now managed by social groups who are
21
22 presumptively antagonistic. The border between such plots opens up emerging
23
24 relations between their respective owners. Land boundaries can be markers of
25
26 proximity and difference.
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32 33 **Boundaries and belonging**

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35 Barth (1969), following his conception of identity as strategic action, noted that
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37 marking boundaries has a strategic dimension. In rural areas, Eric Wolf (1986)
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39 claimed that peasant communities took refuge in closure when facing external
40
41 forces for change. The “closed corporate peasant community” is thus a means of
42
43 collective self-protection. Wolf and Cole (1974) explored comparatively the
44
45 “hidden” boundary of culture imprinted on Italian landscapes that share a similar
46
47 ecology. The corporate community smoothed social contracts in practice since
48
49 feuding is not allowed between neighbors. In the Italian *entroterra*, “the
50
51 landlocked inland sea of boundedness” (Sorge 2015a: 26), this led historically to
52
53 the construction of defensible, even fortified settlements.
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4 In Sicily, these rural settlements (agrotowns) have been compact, densely
5
6 populated, and organized around the ethos of assembling laborers, who end up
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8 residing very close to each other according to latifundism standards (Blok 2000:
9
10 136–54). In fact, the Schneiders’ first major work drew on Wolf’s historical
11
12 anthropology to argue that the mafia’s broker capitalism, and certain cultural codes
13
14 continuous with mafia, were both expressions of such places’ association with the
15
16 world, as well as distance from it² (1976).
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22 The work that goes into “bounding” can divide village and pastoral life
23
24 (Mientjes 2010). Indeed, bounding has been associated to the difference between
25
26 the village space (amenable to circular history) from the linear history of the
27
28 national ambience (Stacul 2005). Such current work in Anthropology reminds us
29
30 of how the public sphere formulates on collective identities built on readings of the
31
32 past (Sorge 2015b; cf Kertzer 1974). Ethnographers of urban Italy have also
33
34 examined how boundaries are set and unset, imposed on or embraced by
35
36 participants. Conspiracy requires boundaries protecting informal networks who
37
38 share secrets from exposure in the public sphere (Mahmud 2015). Informal
39
40 boundaries may emerge from struggles between social classes over living space in
41
42 contested areas (Herzfeld 2009).³
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49 Boundaries, as shared markers, do not just imply proximity, but also social
50
51 connection between the groups involved. This is not least due to the fact that the
52
53 shaping of land plot boundaries in Sicily is not only due to mafia violence but also
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56

57 ² I do not suggest that agro-towns and closed corporate peasant communities are alike. Peasant
58 villages have communal land ownership and redistribute wealth, neither of which are normally
59 found in agro-towns.

60 ³ See the notorious example of “redlining” in the formation of Chicago’s Black ghetto.
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4 to kinship micro-histories, that yield fascinating, unexpected results of proximity
5
6 between “mafia” and “antimafia”. Boundaries between people who have fought
7
8 each other engender social interaction and shared memories. Hence, John Davis’
9
10 comment on land disputes in Italy – ‘You cannot sue an acre: a boundary dispute is
11
12 not a dispute with land but with people’ (1973, 157).
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16
17 Setting boundaries is part of how stereotyped polarities are made, between
18
19 cosmopolitans and localists, for example, and local, national and global power
20
21 structures (Verdery 2002; Sorge 2008). In Sicily, antimafia administrators with
22
23 cosmopolitan backgrounds shared the state’s views on boundaries⁴ – but their
24
25 local antimafia counterparts thought otherwise. I do not wish to argue that
26
27 antimafia is a national narrative with no local reverberations – in fact, below I
28
29 stress the historical and present formations of the antimafia movement. However, I
30
31 do argue that the fact of local proximity between land plots does undermine the
32
33 stark contrast between mafia and antimafia at the national level. Exploring this
34
35 complexity illuminates the specific experience of “doing antimafia” in rural Sicily.
36
37 State confiscations reshaped the boundaries of mafia fields. Subjects in divided
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39 communities enact boundaries accordingly as both separators and points of
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41 contact.
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52 **Land confiscations and antimafia cooperatives**

53 *Violent agrarian roots*

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59 ⁴ Opposition between mafia and antimafia has a longstanding history in Sicily (Lupo
60 2015; Santino 2015; Rakopoulos 2017b).
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4 History as violent imprints on landscapes often hinges on the landscape (Lai 2000)
5
6 and Mafiosi are mainly identified in terms of a specific ‘territory’ they control
7
8 through intimidation and violence (Blok 2000, 88). In Palermo’s hinterland since
9
10 the 19th century, this often took the form of latifundia or large capitalist estates
11
12 (Schneider and Schneider 1976, 7; Petruszewicz 1996). San Giovanni, the village
13
14 where I did fieldwork, was founded in 1779 as a home to the largest number of
15
16 people in the smallest possible space. Inland Sicilian agro-towns were densely
17
18 populated settlements, ‘peasant agglomerations’ reflecting the labour needs of
19
20 latifundia (Blok 1969; Schneider and Schneider 1976, 34; Blok 1988, 47).
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26 San Giovanni, and the valley of Spicco Vallata generally, came under
27
28 mafia influence from the mid-19th century and has been a center of Cosa Nostra
29
30 activity since the 1980s. The landed estates were central to the making of the
31
32 mafia, as Blok insisted, although this is now contested (Sabetti 2011, 22). Despite
33
34 their gradual breakdown since the 1953 land reform, the mafia still flourished
35
36 (Rakopoulos 2017b).
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41 Mafia brokers (*gabellotti*) were middlemen between different levels of
42
43 power, controlling the landless agrarian workforce by violent means (Blok 1988,
44
45 33). The *gabellotti* provided a service to absentee landowners of big Sicilian
46
47 estates before Italy’s land reform. These violent labor patrons, now acting as
48
49 landowners in their own right, became brokers (*sensali*). Mafia violence merged
50
51 with state institutions (Palumbo 2009), and can even replaced state violence in
52
53 some cases (Rakopoulos 2014a, 22; Rakopoulos 2017b). San Giovanni-based
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55 historian Gioacchino Nania notes that the *gabellotti* patrons there became the local
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4 *burgisi* (bourgeoisie) in the 1920s. They formed the Spicco Vallata agrarian
5
6 middle class, pocketing a substantial share of the profits, while maintaining
7
8 positions of local power through violence and serving as the ‘public order in the
9
10 area’ from the mid-19th century onwards (Nania 2000, 131).
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12

13
14 Mafias are often thought of as urban phenomena. But they also flourish in
15
16 the countryside, where they function largely as a network of violent peasant
17
18 entrepreneurs⁵ (Blok 1988). Mafiosi have enterprises and reputations that extend
19
20 far beyond village boundaries, where they cultivate their plots of land. During the
21
22 peak of their global capitalist endeavors (1985–1995), when they controlled the
23
24 global heroin traffic as a virtual monopoly, Spicco Vallata mafiosi remained tied
25
26 to their land and villages (where some had bunkers).
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32 In San Giovanni, mafiosi are sometimes called *signori*, a term with a vast
33
34 array of meanings, including connotations of the landed gentry. Mafiosi were
35
36 never members of the aristocracy, but many come from the rural bourgeoisie
37
38 (Lupo 2011: 9). *Signore* evokes *signoria*, a term for rural and territorial dominion
39
40 (Santino 2015). Most San Giovanni mafiosi, however, were specialized in
41
42 viticulture or came into it from animal husbandry.
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48 In a landscape and economy dominated by vineyards, families such as
49
50 Giovanni Bareto’s were looked down upon before their rise up the class structure
51
52 during the 1950s and 60s. Mafiosi who did not have roots in the rural middle class
53
54 could amass symbolic capital by acquiring mass purchases of vineyard land.
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59 _____
60 ⁵ My interlocutors live in a grey zone where mafia, antimafia and wider political relations of
61 conflict and alliance congeal in contradictory knots (Rakopoulos 2017b, 2018).
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4 Whether though inherited estates or as new owners of bought land, mafiosi still
5
6 dominate a terrain fragmented by public confiscation.
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10 These peasant entrepreneurs established themselves as middlemen of
11 power through violence at home and far away. Both as locals and far-away
12 businessmen, violence served as the major resource for mafiosi in establishing
13 themselves as peasant entrepreneurs, especially as middlemen of power. A
14 configuration of power stems from the bridging of state and locality that mafia
15 patronage and brokerage establishes (Blok 1988). This configuration, which
16 institutes the mafia as a power project incorporated into capitalism (Schneider and
17 Schneider 2004), originates in violence or, most often, the threat of it. The mafia's
18 primitive accumulation has not diminished in Southern Italy today (Saviano 2007,
19 17).

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21
22 Most peasants have long suffered from land shortage on an island where
23 reform was ineffective (Schneider and Schneider 1996, 250–54; Blok 1988: 79).
24 Even when latifundia predominated, a rising middleman class could set the price
25 of wine (Bandiera 2003). Schneider and Schneider call this mafia activity 'broker
26 capitalism' (1976, 160). As Watts has recently pointed out, both Blok and the
27 Schneiders

28
29 ...were edging close to the idea of a 'mafia capitalism', quite unlike the
30 subsequent work of economists on the 'market in protection' [...] – that is,
31 of construing mafia less as a state of exception than as a normalized system
32 of violent capitalist accumulation (Watts 2016, 76, n15).
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4 Mafia aggression becomes a ‘violence industry’, where force is used ‘strategically’
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7 and is carefully invested (Dickie 2004, 47–54).
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9 This historical and geographical context lives on in the memory of many
10
11 antimafia activists. For instance, violent clashes with progressive Sicilian peasant
12
13 movements occurred decades before their cooperatives were established. This
14
15 movement was sometimes especially vocal and well-organized -- during the *Fasci*
16
17 mobilizations in the late 19th century⁶ and after the Second World War
18
19 (Rakopoulos 2014). Memories of that movement, highlighting the violence against
20
21 it, underpin the commitment of all antimafia activists, when they tend their newly
22
23 acquired plots today. They recall, for example, the massacre of agricultural
24
25 workers at Portella della Ginestra in 1947, one of many perpetrated by landed
26
27 Mafiosi, in this case allegedly with state support (Rakopoulos 2014, 22).
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32 The antimafia movement suffered a blow in Portella, but did not give up.
33
34 Their activities in the 1960s and ‘70s are often associated with the Left and indeed
35
36 the Far Left, particularly in Sicily (Vitale 1995). The earliest legislative support for
37
38 antimafia seizure of mafia land was passed in 1982⁷ (Law 646) and began the
39
40 sequestration of assets belonging to mafia. The latter’s power in Sicily has been in
41
42 retreat since the mid-1990s, following a series of mafia killings that provoked
43
44 widespread repudiation (Jamieson 2000, 127). The national government has
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51 ⁶ The *Fasci Siciliani dei Lavoratori* (Sicilian Workers Leagues) of the 1890s were often referred to
52 as ‘the birth of the antimafia movement’ (Santino 2009: 16). The Fasci forced changes in the legal
53 frameworks for rural labor relations in Sicily and Italy. They altered the island’s place in the nation.
54
55

56 ⁷ Passing the “Rognoni/La Torre” law partly resulted from the Sicilian Left’s struggles against the
57 mafia, when Pio La Torre, a PCI MP who was killed by the Cosa Nostra. His partnership with
58 Rognoni reflects a convergence of the two major parties, *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC) and *Partito*
59 *Comunista Italiano*. An antimafia political consensus slowly solidified in the 1980s and peaked
60 after 1994.
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62

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4 increasingly challenged mafia control of landed property. Confiscations of mafia
5
6 land unsettled the symbolic and material significance of land for the mafiosi. The
7
8 land controlled by antimafia coops certainly does not match the old latifundia
9
10 since it is divided into many small plots, often vineyards. Most of the land in the
11
12 area is actually owned by smallholders, mainly winemakers (7Ha of vineyard per
13
14 household on average). Antimafia and mafia plots bordering each other average
15
16 4Ha. We must review the story of these confiscations to understand the social
17
18 consequences of plot proximity between a national project and its local
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20 articulation.
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29 *Antimafia land confiscations*

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31 In 1996, the antimafia NGO Libera (the largest in Italy) collected more than one
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33 million signatures in support of a demand that ‘the mafia restore what was unjustly
34
35 usurped’ (Libera 2010, 1; Frigerio and Pati 2006). Law 109 of 1996, which
36
37 provided for the ‘social use of assets confiscated by the mafia’, followed soon
38
39 after. Once a mafioso had been convicted, his assets, including property rights to
40
41 land, would be handed over to the Ministry for Internal Affairs. After identifying
42
43 the jurisdiction where such assets were located, the Ministry would pass them on
44
45 to the relevant municipality.
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51 From 1999 onwards, in order to ensure that the confiscated land would be
52
53 put to ‘social use’, much of it was eventually transferred to local antimafia
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55 cooperatives set up to cultivate wheat, vines, and vegetables. A confiscated winery
56
57 in Spicco Vallata supported wine production. These cooperatives adhere to
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4 constitutionally protected principles and are non-profit organizations (Italian
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6
7 Constitution, Article 45). Accordingly, the government supports them while Libera
8
9 helps with marketing. Libera wins public sympathy for the wider project and
10
11 provides legal aid and advocacy. It promoted the cooperative movement by
12
13 explaining that the coops got the land since ‘they represented the community’
14
15
16 (Libera 2010, 3).
17

18
19 In Sicily, the Spicco Vallata valley,⁸ saw most of these antimafia initiatives.
20
21 Its eight municipalities were the legal owners of the transferred plots and allocated
22
23 their administration and adjunct rights to the relevant cooperatives (Rakopoulos
24
25 2014). From 1996 until now, the valley has been the leading site in Italy for land
26
27 reforms based on antimafia confiscations and restitutions. There are around ten
28
29 such cooperatives operating on land confiscated from the mafia. They are spread
30
31 across Italy from Sicily (throughout the island), to Campania, Puglia, Calabria, and
32
33 Lazio. They occupy over 1500 hectares (some 3750 acres⁹), mainly vineyards, plus
34
35 groves, legumes and wheat. Palermo province alone hosts four of them. An ad hoc
36
37 public institution oversaw the organization of these reforms. Entitled ‘Spicco
38
39 Consortium’, its president was Lucio Mandola, a fiery 45-year-old lawyer from
40
41 Palermo. Mandola was selected for his record of antimafia convictions. Three
42
43 more functionaries worked in the Consortium’s office. , It was in Palermo until
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51 2010, when it moved to the Spicco Vallata village of San Giovanni.
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53 The first plot to be ‘restored’ – that is, allocated to a cooperative – was a
54
55 vineyard belonging to Totò ‘The Beast’ Riina, which was deeded to a cooperative
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58 ⁸ Fieldwork lasted 18 months in 2008-2009.

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60 ⁹ Data from 2018.

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4 named Lavoro e Altro. Three other co-ops were created, with names drawn from a
5
6 repertoire of antimafia heroes (Falcone in 2001, Borsellino and Libera in
7
8 2006) after public competitions organized by the Spicco Consortium as part of its
9
10 plan to re-allocate the land ‘to the community’. The overall political situation,
11
12 supported the antimafia movement in the 1990s (Schneider and Schneider 2003;
13
14 2006). It was boosted by urban demonstrations and generated a wide consensus
15
16 about the antimafia struggle’s importance.
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21 Mandola, with other lawyers and legislators involved in the confiscation
22
23 and redistribution laws, told me that the confiscation law and the legislation in
24
25 general were aimed at isolating the mafiosi, distancing them from local people and
26
27 ‘excluding them from landholding, which was their symbolic source of power’.
28
29 The Consortium and Libera wanted to form an antimafia community that never
30
31 fully materialized. This was partly due to the contacts that antimafia co-op
32
33 members had with their mafiosi neighbors. Instead of isolating mafia proprietors,
34
35 confiscations brought them closer to people committed to ‘doing antimafia’. As
36
37 Enzo, a manual laborer and member of the Falcone co-op, said, ‘Plot boundaries
38
39 are made by people, not just by lines on a map... they are what people make of
40
41 them’.
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48 The confiscation law did not apply to all land. Agricultural tracts had
49
50 diverse histories of acquisition; but they fell into two broad categories. Certain
51
52 tracts came to a mafia family as dowry or through legitimate savings. Locals
53
54 typically describe this as family land. But others were acquired by a mafioso as a
55
56 result of his criminal activities, through extortion or money laundering, and are
57
58 defined as his own (*propria*) land. Only the latter was subject to confiscation.
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4 Using money from the rackets, mafiosi tended to buy all the plots
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6
7 surrounding their original familial land to raise their property holdings and social
8
9 clout. The outer circles were confiscated for being bought with drugs money, but
10
11 often the original plot in the inner circle was not. The antimafia cooperatives
12
13 therefore ‘ringed’ the mafia in the property landscape. The result was constant
14
15 interaction between antimafia and mafiosi.
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19 The antimafia cooperatives were not all uniform and internally
20
21 homogeneous. Although in theory they worked ‘for the community’, they were
22
23 stratified. Internal divisions reflect a history of social relations that predate the co-
24
25 ops. Manual workers from Spicco Vallata villages were the majority; graduate
26
27 office workers from Palermo served as the managers. Most workers¹⁰ had long
28
29 worked on mafia lands and carried complex memories of social relations with
30
31 mafiosi. The managers, however, had clerical and management jobs in the small
32
33 offices that the three co-ops shared in San Giovanni – the ‘antimafia headquarters’.
34
35 Most of them commuted every morning from Palermo and rarely, if ever, visited
36
37 the plots. Reactions to contacts with mafiosi were partly conditioned by members’
38
39 social background. Workers had an immediate understanding of the plots and their
40
41 mafiosi neighbors. Other divisions than mafia vs antimafia were revealed when the
42
43 workers were in unintended contact with “the mafia”¹¹. Two vignettes illustrate
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52 ¹⁰ Landholding and wage-work had been combined for generations, so that local workers often
53 cultivated small tracts of land (mainly vineyards) while working for wages.
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56 ¹¹ I have focused on the inner class divisions of the cooperatives, as they reflect different
57 experience of the local territory and history elsewhere, exploring for instance different associations
58 of kinship (Rakopoulos 2017a, 2017b: 103) or discursive techniques (Rakopoulos 2019). Here,
59 these class differences provide a backdrop to my argument as well as a layer of complexity to the
60 ethnographic analysis, but are not my focal point.
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4 these dynamics.
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10 **The story of two land tracts**

11 ***'Familiare' land: the story of Antonia Bareto's plot***

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16 The Bareto family has been central to Spicco Vallata and to Sicily, since the 1950s
17
18 and before. They produced three generations of leading figures in Cosa Nostra.

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21 This patriline came to an end with Giovanni Bareto, who was condemned to life
22
23 imprisonment in 1999 for the murder of over 150 people and for partial control of
24
25 the mafia's global heroin trafficking during the 1980s and early 1990s. The
26
27 Baretos owned plots of land near their now-abandoned home on the outskirts of
28
29 San Giovanni. Antonia Bareto, the wife of mafioso and clan leader Bernardo,
30
31 inherited the vineyards from her father (a non-mafioso). She then handed them to
32
33 her two sons, Giovanni and Vincenzo, both mafiosi, who were arrested in 1996
34
35 (Giovanni had already been convicted *in absentia*). The vineyards had not been
36
37 confiscated because their mother was not part of the mafia, and thus her assets did
38
39 not derive from 'mafia activity'. The land was therefore deemed to be familial
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41 property.
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49 Adamo and Nicola, both locals, recalled a time in the mid-1990s when they
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51 worked on the harvest there together and agreed that the plots had, until recently,
52
53 been very productive. They told me about working the land and relations with their
54
55 employers. Although these were did not involve violent crime and drugs
56
57 trafficking, they recalled that time fondly, stressing how beautiful the vineyard
58
59 was and how well the family cared for it. They both thought it was a shame that
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4 this vineyard, although not confiscated, now lay uncultivated.
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7 Antonia Bareto never managed it, even after Giovanni was imprisoned.
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9 Adamo explained that “the mother could not cultivate this *familiare* plot, which
10 she felt belonged to her son”. I asked what ‘*familiare*’ meant. Palermo lawyers and
11 Consortium managers explained that ‘familial’ implied belonging to the family
12 unit. The term referred to plots that had not been confiscated, since it had been
13 proven that the mafioso owner had acquired them through means other than the
14 ‘usurpation’ entailed in ‘mafia accumulation activity’ (Frigerio and Pati 2006: 19
15 and 59). Inheritance and dowry were the main techniques by which mafiosi
16 acquired land tracts with *familiare* status. In the case above, Antonia Bareto had
17 bequeathed the legal title to a male child (a mafioso).
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31 Adamo and Nicola are linked to this story of land ownership through two
32 kinds of relations: antimafia co-op membership and a history of working for the
33 Baretos. As the new overseers of a plot that shared a boundary with the Bareto’s
34 land, they found in a surprisingly divided condition, linked both to the cooperative
35 (as co-op members) and to the Baretos (as ex-workers).
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44 The juxtaposition of mafia *familiare* land and their confiscated plots
45 yielded surprising behavioral continuities. I shall consider further how familiarity
46 and neighborhood belong to continuing histories of social relations through the
47 story of the plots of Mimmo Torinese, another local mafioso.
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57 ***‘Propria’ land: at the boundary, with Torinese***
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59 When convicted, a mafioso has to prove that his land assets were gaine
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4 legitimately. If not, the property is presumed to be an outcome of his mafia
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6 activity. In contrast to the category *familiare*, this is locally called *proprietà*
7
8 *propria* ('own property'). Land that falls into this category is confiscated in the
9
10 absence of proof to the contrary, it is legally registered as acquired through illicit
11
12 means.
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16
17 Mimmo Torinese was a renowned farmer. Like many of the village mafiosi,
18
19 he had invested rackets money in buying land that was adjacent to his original
20
21 familial land in a conscious strategy to expand. Some of his plots had been
22
23 confiscated and were now managed by the Falcone cooperative, while others still
24
25 remained in his family's possession. Some cooperative members had vivid
26
27 memories of working for the Torinese family. Many of these Torinese plots
28
29 bordered on those confiscated and were now managed by antimafia cooperatives.
30
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32
33
34 Torinese owned a vineyard in Reale (a Spicco Vallata village) that was used
35
36 as a front to launder drugs money in the mid-1980s. After the Baretos' downfall
37
38 Torinese became the San Giovanni mafia leader from 1996 until his conviction in
39
40 absentia in 1999, when his land was confiscated and became state property. The
41
42 Reale municipality then transferred its usufruct rights to the Falcone antimafia
43
44 cooperative under a renewable rent-free lease. A related winery building was
45
46 confiscated from Mimmo Torinese in 2007. In March 2010, it became Passi, the
47
48 cooperative's winery, bottling under the Falcone label.
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52
53 A Torinese *familiare* tract was next to the confiscated land and winery.
54
55 Early one April morning, Enzo and Piero, two local members of the Falcone co-op,
56
57 were working just a few yards from the Torinese plot. Suddenly, Enzo's cellphone
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4 rang. It was Mimmo Torinese's 40-year-old son Ciccio, just out of prison,
5
6
7 complaining in strong Sicilian dialect and demanding to meet with someone from
8
9 the Falcone co-op to discuss a problem with plot boundaries.

10
11 The incident distressed the Falcone managers, especially the 35-year-old
12 president, Luca, and the vice-president, Mina. They were opposed to a meeting
13
14 with neighbors whom they considered 'impossible to reason with'. They insisted
15
16 that the cooperative call in the police. Even if only for a meeting about property
17
18 boundaries, they wanted the *Carabinieri* (the Italian military police) to be present.
19
20
21 'Our boundaries are not to be negotiated at a mafioso's phone call. These lands are
22
23 not *just* plots; the state is invested in them', Luca told me. But the workers were
24
25 adamant that a meeting should be held with their mafioso neighbor on this issue;
26
27 Luca and Mina acquiesced. The workers claimed that they understood the situation
28
29 better than 'the office', since they worked alongside the cooperatives' neighbors
30
31 (*vicini*).

32
33 The meeting was arranged for next day at 6 a.m. It took place at the
34
35 boundary line between the Torinese family land and their confiscated plot. The
36
37 mafioso's facial features were barely visible in the dim light, upsetting some co-op
38
39 members; but the meeting went well. Later that day, Enzo reported, 'He [Torinese]
40
41 was well-mannered. He was a gentleman, like these people [mafiosi] often are'.
42
43

44
45 Neighborhood ties are formed here through recognizing difference, but also
46
47 accepting possessor's empirical rights (contact between proximate realities – as
48
49 workers and mafiosi are part of the same rural locality, sharing life conditions).
50
51 The village is greatly stratified, and Enzo's words show how this is so: *signore*
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4 (see above) still implies strongly in Sicily a member of the landed gentry. Torinese
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6
7 was indeed a ‘gentleman’, a *signore* of this sort.
8

9
10 Nicola juxtaposed his remembrance of the ‘past continuous unity of these
11 plots’ with the current experience of working a now-fragmented domain of
12 confiscated and *familiare* plots. The historical connections between land had been
13
14 confiscated and *familiare* plots. The historical connections between land had been
15
16 reconfigured; but they left behind lively neighborhood relations between mafia and
17
18 antimafia. For cooperative members, like Nicola, who remembered working on the
19
20 same plots for the old mafiosi owners, this sense of a ‘lost past’ was intense.
21
22 Remembering the plots’ unity before confiscation made their boundaries seem to
23
24 be less rigid in practice than they were in legal discourse.
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29
30 These memories were not idealized; co-op members realize that the new
31
32 land boundaries divide their present from a more violent past. This division of time
33
34 does not mean that the mafia has been wiped off the earth, but rather that its co-
35
36 existence with the antimafia is acknowledged in categories of landed property.
37
38 Enzo and Piero saw that Ciccio Torinese *did* have a rightful claim over the
39
40 disputed land between the two properties. Ciccio proved this by providing the
41
42 relevant legal documents during the meeting. Surprised, the co-op members
43
44 checked them and admitted that he had law on his side. They had accidentally
45
46 extended their plot’s boundaries, thereby trespassing on their neighbor’s *familiare*
47
48 property. Ciccio Torinese’s politeness, reinforced by law and by the fact that some
49
50 co-op members had worked on and now near his plots, yielded new
51
52 understandings of what sharing a land boundary meant under present
53
54 circumstances. This shared understanding had legal consequences; an expected
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4 conflict was resolved amicably without external force.
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10 **Uncomfortable proximity: moral borders and lines of contact**

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14 This idea about the land boundary was conditioned, in the case of Torinese, by the
15
16 contiguity of co-ops' plots with the mafioso's, as well as by the contact with
17
18 Ciccio Torinese himself. It is through such contacts that people of the
19
20 cooperatives' manual workforce team actually experienced the boundaries of the
21
22 confiscated plots as lines of contact. To recall Enzo's statement, land plot
23
24 proximity was an 'issue made of people, not just borders'. The coop managers
25
26 sometimes thought it was impossible to establish genuine contact with mafiosi
27
28 neighbors. They also thought that the boundaries between *familiare* and
29
30 confiscated plots needed to be defended. Like a state's borders, these boundaries
31
32 represented a clear division between mafia and antimafia that could be undermined
33
34 by social contact across the two domains. For most of them, the mafiosi belonged -
35
36 - as Mina, the Falcone co-op's vice-president, told me -- to a 'different universe'
37
38 and should not be accorded moral judgment. By defending physical land
39
40 boundaries and invoking the authority of law, Mina expressed her belief in this
41
42 utter difference, protecting what she saw as the moral world of the cooperatives
43
44 from its immoral opponents. Managers generally believed that court action was the
45
46 most appropriate solution to all problems regarding disputes with the mafia.
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56 Some Falcone managers spelled out this radical contrast with their
57
58 neighbors when using a language of war. Dealing with plot boundaries meant
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4 ‘defending borders’. Learning to navigate these borders was a skill that co-op
5
6 administrators learnt on the job, interacting with mafiosi in San Giovanni,
7
8 although never in Palermo (Rakopoulos 2019, 91-93). Sometimes, they asserted
9
10 that ‘the Italian state was represented’ by and within the confines of their plots,
11
12 thereby marking *familiare* land not only as not part of the state, but indeed
13
14 threatening to state land. As Silvio, the president of Falcone, put it in an interview,
15
16 there was ‘a lot to defend in our boundaries; not just land, but whatever both we
17
18 and the state stand for in Sicily’. When I asked why the Italian flag was waving at
19
20 the inauguration of the Passi winery on confiscated grounds, an impassioned
21
22 manager told me, ‘Because we are Italians and they [mafiosi] are not’.
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29 Although they did not vilify the mafiosi and did see them as co-villagers,
30
31 manual workers also saw the co-op’s plots as markers of difference. They too
32
33 sometimes employed a warlike rhetoric to describe their proximity to mafia, using
34
35 phrases like ‘peaceful coexistence’ and ‘diplomacy’. In fact, co-op worker-
36
37 members felt they knew better than the managers what ‘life at the border’ was like.
38
39 Enzo told me that ‘the kids in the office do not know what it is to face the mafiosi
40
41 every day, there, at the battle front [*al fronte*]’.
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45

46 The above phrases constitute a range of metaphors which imply that the
47
48 process of cultivating the confiscated land right by the mafioso neighbor was like
49
50 being on the frontline. Yet manual workers also felt at some degree of familiarity
51
52 with mafiosi and refused to treat people on the other side of the ‘front’ as hostile
53
54 strangers, insisting that the administration’s ideas about the people at the other side
55
56 of the ‘front’ as strangers were out of kilter. As Adamo told me, ‘We, the village
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4 people have been brought up next door to our current neighbors’.

5
6
7 When I asked the Carabinieri marshal from San Giovanni about the
8
9 Torinese event, he made much of the idea of *convivere*: ‘The co-ops and mafia
10
11 need to learn to live together’ (*bisogna imparare il convivere*). The current
12
13 neighborly relations between co-op workers and the mafiosi revealed how
14
15 innocuous the antimafia was: ‘The cooperatives don’t mean anything bad for the
16
17 mafiosi; they don’t bother them. The fact that they are working right next to
18
19 Torinese and he offers them water, for example, means that the mafiosi see the
20
21 antimafia just as neighbors’.

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27 Managers thought of plot boundaries as borders for their moral universe,
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29 while workers did not believe that their plots secured a universe and so they did
30
31 not reject contact with mafiosi. Indeed, they recognized mafiosi as fellow citizens,
32
33 as people who belonged to their universe. The Consortium’s attempts to establish,
34
35 through the confiscations, separation of mafiosi and antimafia people at the local
36
37 level – a ‘*spaccatura*’ (split), as Leoluca Orlando, the antimafia mayor of Palermo,
38
39 once said – was far from complete.
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44 Mafia-antimafia relations are still shaped by a long history of violence that
45
46 provides a backdrop to the current truce (not reconciliation) between them over
47
48 their shared boundaries¹². The marshal’s point trivializes ‘living together’ as mere
49
50 conviviality. People who live and work with the mafia know that history is moving
51
52 their way, but now is not the time to force the issue.
53
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58
59 ¹² At the same time, they should also be contextualized in local networks where kinship
60 offers a major lens of local understanding (an issue tackled at length in Rakopoulos 2017a,
61 as well as in some ethnographic detail in Rakopoulos 2019: 95)
62

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4 Adamo and Enzo once told me that the co-op plots they were then working
5
6 on were once ‘covered in blood’. It was where trade unionist Placido Rizzotto
7
8 gave a passionate speech to the gathered peasants before they occupied the estate,
9
10 facing *gabelloti* violence. The mafia assassinated Rizzotto in 1948 (Paternostro
11
12 1994). Not far from that plot, the police in 1994 discovered the body of a small
13
14 boy who was strangled by a local mafioso.
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23 **Conclusion: Neighborhood and shared boundaries**

24
25 People of divergent social categories often live together in a village, thereby
26
27 evoking social memories of a violent past (e.g. Sorge 2015a). Yet the persistence
28
29 of inherited family land produces surprising proximities between mafia and
30
31 antimafia. This Sicilian example should lead us to reflect on how the logic of state
32
33 territorial boundaries can yet support two micro-communities living together at the
34
35 local level, while being sharply opposed in the national sphere. The wider political
36
37 implications are significant.
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43 The mafia and antimafia find themselves in an extreme situation where
44
45 they are the most radically opposed classes in a peasant community who also live
46
47 very closely together. Bounded entities like these micro-communities spill over
48
49 into each other and become defined by their opposites. Antimafia actors are aware
50
51 that their neighbors are potentially violent, and this enmity is not just imagined.
52
53 The antimafia people with whom I lived would often identify mafiosi neighbors as
54
55 villains, whether past, present or both. This enmity between neighbors is
56
57 manifested in recent acts of violence, but also in the abrupt interventions that
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4 followed these acts, especially in the domain of landed property.
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7 This internal differentiation (boundaries within the community itself) has
8
9 been noted by some anthropologists of Italy before (Mahmud 2015; Sorge 2015b).
10
11 Division by means of boundaries, is not confined to a plot of land¹³. Beyond plots
12
13 of land with their symbolic weight (“antimafia”), sociality moves on as feuding
14
15 groups become closer than they expected. The village is a spatial and temporal
16
17 community where both sides have much to share, despite differences, as opposites
18
19 interacting with each other (Blok 1997: 49). In this scenario, the bearers of
20
21 national narratives (such as antimafia administrators) are sometimes squeezed out.
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27 The violence embedded in some Italian landscapes suggests a counter-
28
29 narrative to that of national history: “the past sits in places” and these places can
30
31 be uncomfortable for bystanders or even for some community members (Sorge
32
33 2015b). Antimafia co-op administrators like Mina were certainly uncomfortable,
34
35 as when she insisted that the mafiosi were aliens there, excluded from “new
36
37 Sicily’s moral universe”. The reaffirmation of bounded identity is thus contested in
38
39 these communities which are not at all monolithic or homogenous. The empirical
40
41 reality of people like Adamo, Nicola and Enzo does not gibe with a national
42
43 history that imposes one reading of the landscape over people’s experience of it
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49 (Sorge 2015a: 157; cf. Stacul 2005: 819).
50
51

52 To know one’s land means also to know the landscape with its multiple
53
54 temporal layers, like a palimpsest. This essay has used land borders, separating and
55
56

57
58 ¹³ Division means separation in order to unify, but we think it means just
59 separating. The Latins divided themselves into three tribes to share cow meat
60 together in a sacrifice (*distributio*).
61
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4 uniting bounded fields in a shared social landscape, to explore the wider context of
5
6 the antimafia cooperative movement in Sicily. This context is pregnant with
7
8 ideology and practice that splits antimafia organisations too, at times as much
9

10
11
12 Demonstrating a firm, normative antimafia morality was, after all, part and
13
14 parcel of co-op administrators' ideology. It is something I have explored in some
15
16 length elsewhere, and it might pay to allude to those points here- as the case of the
17
18 antimafia co-ops in Sicily is witness to broader divisions in Sicilian and Italian
19
20 society, certainly regarding antimafia practice but also surely regarding other civil
21
22 society concerns. The fact that co-ops managers thought of court action was an
23
24 issue that often brought some confusion to meetings between coop managers and
25
26 local members (Rakopoulos 2018, 173). The reasons of such "moral divisions" and
27
28 different "worldviews" on labour, as I have argued at length in a monograph "lay
29
30 mostly outside the cooperatives framework: in the backgrounds of the members, in
31
32 the broader social relationships in which they were embedded, and in how these
33
34 related differentially to the political project guiding the co-ops" (Rakopoulos
35
36 2017b, 89).
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44
45 The enmity of my interlocutors with mafiosi is largely constructed by
46
47 national categories and imposed on people who share or have shared some social
48
49 life in the village. Mafiosi and antimafiosi also share some sociality outside the
50
51 village. The national contradiction between them is sometimes resolved at the
52
53 local level through liminal life at the boundary. These Sicilian stories show that the
54
55 shared memory of a violent history may be recast when sharing boundary plots as
56
57 markers of separation also generates points of contact. Antimafia confiscations
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4 brought together antithetical social actors who are neighbors sharing more than is
5
6 conventionally understood. A project designed to eradicate mafia power resulted
7
8 in conviviality (*convivere*) with the mafia.
9

10
11 The unintended looseness of ‘living together’ requires a rethink of
12
13 differences at proximity. Political projects of land change, such as the antimafia,
14
15 assume a moral unity of cause, which they hope to realize on terms that they
16
17 cannot control or even anticipate. Boundaries between land belonging to enemies
18
19 can become sites of encounter.
20
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Abstract [200w]

Based on the assumed antithesis between mafia and antimafia in rural Sicily, this essay explores boundaries as shared points of conflict and sociality. It ethnographically explores the condition of neighborhood between land plots that belong to mafiosi on the one hand and to antimafia cooperatives on the other. The uncomfortable proximity of enemies that ensues, allows us to reconsider boundaries as symbols of separation. As markers of difference, Sicilian boundaries are informed by a legacy of violence imprinted on the landscape, and divide people in bounded categories. However, they are also defined by kinship-based inheritance histories, while they provide points of contact and buttress an unexpected spatial and moral order of neighborhood relations. A focus on the border shared between plots managed by social groups assumed to be antagonistic, allows to examine the germinal conflictual and ordering relations emerging between their respective owners. I show how land boundaries can be markers of both proximity and difference, even between opposed groups who find themselves owning adjoining plots of land. I argue that the boundary underpinning such divisions can bring the feuding groups of mafia and antimafia in proximity, rather than keeping them confined in bounded entities.

The shared boundary: Sicilian mafia and antimafia land**Introduction***The place*

Although most of their revenue comes from racketeering and illegal trade of narcotics, many contemporary Sicilian mafiosi have been landowners for as much as three or four generations (Blok 1988; Santino 2007). In the Palermitan hinterland of Spicco Vallata,¹ mafia families held large areas of land divided into a number of plots (Lupo 2011). Given the illegal acquisition of these plots, many

¹ Like all names of places and people throughout the text, this is a pseudonym used in order to respect and protect interlocutors' safety and confidentiality. Exceptions are made for very public figures, like the mafioso Salvatore Riina.

were confiscated during the 2000s, and were eventually transferred to so-called ‘antimafia’ cooperatives as part of a broader combined civil society and state effort to counteract mafia power (Schneider and Schneider 2005). Since the mid-1990s, Sicilian state agents, civil society activists, and actors associated with agrarian cooperatives have led the process of transferring land confiscated from the mafia, ‘back to the community’. This has resulted in a reversal of land ownership once appropriated by mafia (Barbieri 2005: 87; Frigerio and Pati 2006: 15).

The antimafia co-ops project (as the aforementioned process is known) seeks to amend the injustices that mafia has perpetrated in the area through giving land to agrarian cooperatives (Libera 2010). As a result, many co-op members ended up sharing borders with the many mafiosi who still cultivated the neighboring plots (their ‘family’ land) that had not been confiscated. Sicily thus offers an interesting case study of supposedly radical differences between land tenants who are nominal enemies but are nevertheless forced to work in close proximity. The policies of state expropriation of mafia lands may weaken the economic foundation of the mafia, but do not erase the complicated communal and kin ties that mark relations between the mafia and antimafia worlds. Instead, in some instances, agents of mafia and antimafia are now in closer geographical proximity than ever. The creation of antimafia cooperatives seems to make the connections between these worlds, and the grey space between them (see Author 2018, Pine 2015), more visible.

Focusing on this paradox, I here discuss the unexpected and confused conditions created as a result of the land reallocation in a Sicilian valley. I specifically focus on the contiguity between land plots registered under different

property statuses, now managed by social groups assumed to be antagonistic. A focus on the border shared between such plots, allows to examine the emerging between their respective owners. My aim is to show how land boundaries can be markers of both proximity and difference, even between supposedly antagonistic groups who find themselves owning adjoining plots of land.

Boundaries and belonging

Barth's observation that policing boundaries has a strategic character –based on his understanding of identity as strategically enacted- gained considerable traction in Anthropology and beyond (Barth 1969). In rural contexts, Eric Wolf's idea that peasant communities closed themselves in response to economic and social changes wrought by external forces, has informed understandings of historical connectedness and closeness (Wolf 1986). The “closed corporate peasant community” can, in his work, be understood as a protective device. In an Italian context, Wolf (with Cole) have comparatively explored the “hidden” boundary of culture, imprinted on landscapes that share the same ecology (1974). The corporate community allowed for a smooth operation of social contract, as the varied neighborhood relations within it do not involve feuds. In the Italian *entroterra*, “the landlocked inland sea of boundness” (Sorge 2015a: 26), this condition has resulted in a historical process of constructing fortified settlements in various areas.

In Sicily, these rural settlements (agrotowns) have been compact, densely populated, and organized around the ethos of assembling laborers, who end up

residing very close to each other according to latifundism standards (Blok 2000: 136–54). In fact, Schneiders' first major work drew on Wolf's historical anthropology to argue that the mafia's broker capitalism, and certain cultural codes continuous with mafia, were both expressions of such places' association with the world, as well as distance from it (1976).

The work that goes into “bounding” can divide village and pastoral life (Mientjes 2010), or can indeed historically differentiate the lived village space of circular history from the linearity of its national ambience (Stacul 2005). Such current work in Anthropology reminds us of how the public sphere formulates over a collective identity sense suggested by the past (Sorge 2015b; cf Kertzer 1974).

In urban ethnographies of Italy, scholars also trace the processes of setting and unsettling boundaries. Such works discuss boundaries that are imposed on and/or embraced by ethnographic subjects. Indicatively, shared boundaries of conspiracy, built amidst the public sphere, protect networks of mutual secrets, and constitute a form of interpersonal community protection (Mahmud 2015). Boundaries can moreover be the outcomes of a struggle to maintain a distinct area as a shared space for living, against encroaching waves of speculation on urban land (Herzfeld 2009).

Departing from the above ethnographic examples, I am interested in exploring how the boundary, as a shared marker, might not only be suggesting closeness, but also connectedness between the groups implicated. This is not least due to the fact that the shaping of land plot boundaries in Sicily is not only due to

mafia violence but also to kinship micro-histories, that yield fascinating, unexpected results of proximity between “mafia” and “antimafia”. Exploring the boundary between people inimical to each other, emplaced in spaces of marked difference (in this case: mafia and antimafia land) alerts us to ensuing socialities and memories that they can both share. This is particularly pertinent given nested ideas on how boundaries –and neighborhood around them- are ideal concepts for the ethnographic analysis of relationality (Lamont and Molnár 2002). Here, 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) – offers a helpful insight.

Setting boundaries is also a process that relates to the construction of “stereotypes” of cosmopolitans and localists, and local power structures vis-à-vis wider ones (Verdery 2002; Sorge 2008). In Sicily, antimafia cosmopolitan administrators had specific opinions about boundaries, which were in line with those of the state² – but were not shared by their antimafia local(ist) companions. I do not wish to argue that antimafia is a national narrative with no local reverberations – in fact, below I stress the historical and present formations of the antimafia movement. However, I do argue that the empirical circumstance of land plot proximity locally, nuances the fixed categorization of stark contrast between mafia and antimafia at the national level. Exploring this complexity illuminates the specific experience of “doing antimafia” in rural Sicily. Spicco Vallata is an area

² Opposition between mafia and antimafia has a longstanding history in Sicily, as discussed in the work of Sicilian scholars (Lupo 2015; Santino 2015), and as I have acknowledged from an anthropological perspective (see Author 2017b).

where state confiscations reshaped the fields of bounded mafia land. The violence, but also the neighborhood sociality that emerged between these arrangements and the local Sicilian notions of boundary (frequently non-congruent with state views) suggests that subjects in divided communities enact boundaries as both separators and points of contact.

Land confiscations and antimafia cooperatives

Violent agrarian roots

Attention to boundaries and their association with violence is indicative of the ways we relate to history as violent imprint on landscapes (Lai 2000). Mafiosi are foremost identified in terms of a specific ‘territory’ they control through intimidation and violence (Blok 2000, 88). In the Palermitan rural hinterland, this territory implied landed estates and the rise, especially since the 19th century, of latifundism, a capitalist type of estate-based agrarian political economy (Schneider and Schneider 1976, 7; see also Petruszewicz 1996). San Giovanni, the village where I did fieldwork, was founded in 1779 to host the largest number of people in the smallest possible space. The inland Sicilian ‘agrotowns’ were densely populated settlements, ‘peasant agglomerations’ that reflected the needs of latifundist land tenure (Blok 1969; Schneider and Schneider 1976, 34; Blok 1988, 47).

San Giovanni and the valley of Spicco Vallata in general, have experienced the rise of the mafia, beginning in the mid-19th century, and have been a center of Cosa Nostra activity since the 1980s. Despite recent claims to the contrary (Sabetti

2011, 22), the landed estates have been central to the making of the mafia, *à la* Blok, although their gradual breakdown since the 1953 land reform has certainly not contributed to its unmaking (Author 2017b).

Rural mafia brokerage has a history of its own in Spicco Vallata, and in Western Sicily more generally. The *gabellotti* landholding was a service to the absentee landowners of the big Sicilian estates before the Italian land reform of 1953. In that respect, they occupied middlemen positions between different levels of power, both local and broader, securing the landlords' profits through violent means of controlling the landless agrarian workforce (Blok 1988, 33). After the breakdown of the estates and the distribution of land, the violent labor patrons (*gabellotti*), now acting as landowners in their own right, turned into brokers (*sensali*). In this system, mafia violence is fused with state power, merged with state institutions (Palumbo 2009), and is even exercised in lieu of state violence (Author 2014a, 22; Author 2017b). San Giovanni-based historian Gioacchino Nania notes that the San Giovanni *gabellotti* patrons soon became the local *burgisi* (bourgeois) in the 1920s. They formed the Spicco Vallata agrarian middle classes as they pocketed substantial parts of the profit made *and* maintained positions of local power through violence, serving as the 'public order in the area' from the mid-19th century onwards (Nania 2000, 131).

Despite much discussion on mafias as urban phenomena, there is an agrarian mafia operating as an ongoing and historical intimidating presence in Sicilian everyday life. This mafia lives as a rural entity and functions largely as a

network of violent peasant entrepreneurs³ (Blok 1988). Mafiosi have an entrepreneurial activity and reputation that extend far beyond their villages' boundaries, as well as a situated, quotidian life enclosed by the boundaries of their land plots. During the peak of their global capitalist endeavors (1985–1995), while they controlled the global heroin traffic virtually as a monopoly, Spicco Vallata mafiosi remained thoroughly linked to their land and bounded to their villages (some, in fact, living in bunkers in village territory).

In San Giovanni, mafiosi are sometimes called *signori*, an indigenous term with a vast array of meaning, including connotations of landed gentry. Mafiosi were never members of the aristocracy, but many come from a rural bourgeoisie (see Lupo 2011: 9). *Signore* resonates with *signoria*, a term for rural and more generally territorial dominion (Santino 2015). Most San Giovanni mafiosi, however, including those mentioned in this essay were viticulturers, or came into viticulture from animal husbandry.

In an area where vineyards dominated both landscape and economy, families like that of the infamous Giovanni Bareto were looked down upon before their class ascendancy into and through mafia (during the 1950s and 1960s). Rural domination implied that mafiosi who did not have roots in the agrarian middle class should acquire plots in mass purchases of vineyard land to amass symbolic capital. As either the inheritors of past landed estates or the owners of newly

³ My interlocutors navigate different situations that produce a grey zone, where knots of relations pertaining to mafia, anti-mafia and state both conflict and merge (Author 2017b).

bought large plots, the mafiosi had established themselves in an agrarian domain fragmented by state confiscations.

Both as locals and far-away businessmen, violence served as the major resource for mafiosi in establishing themselves as peasant entrepreneurs, especially as middlemen of power. A configuration of power stems from the bridging of state and locality that mafia patronage and brokerage establishes (Blok 1988). This configuration, which institutes the mafia as a power project incorporated into capitalism (Schneider and Schneider 2004), originates in violence or, most often, the threat of it. The mafia's primitive accumulation has been constant, continuing to this day in Southern Italy (Saviano 2007, 17).

Historically, this is a result of the land deprivation of most peasants, on an island where land reform has had poor effects (Schneider and Schneider 1996, 250–54), as well as political intentions (Blok 1988: 79). Even in the latifundist period, a rising class had moved out of rent capitalism into becoming middlemen (Blok 1988: 67), setting the price of grapes (Bandiera 2003). Schneider and Schneider, in the context of monocrop agriculture in Sicily, call this mafia activity 'broker capitalism' (1976, 160). As Watts has recently pointed out, both Blok and the Schneiders

...were edging close to the idea of a 'mafia capitalism', quite unlike the subsequent work of economists on the 'market in protection' [...] – that is, of construing mafia less as a state of exception than as a normalised system of violent capitalist accumulation (Watts 2016, 76, n15).

In this endeavor, the mafia's aggression operates as a 'violence industry', where force is used 'strategically' and is carefully invested (Dickie 2004, 47–54).

The neighborhood of bounded land plots explored here, in the area of San Giovanni, should be placed in this historical and geographical context, which draws on the lived memory of many antimafia participants. For instance, a series of violent clashes with different aspects of a Sicilian peasant movement inspired by progressive ideas has taken place decades before the antimafia agrarian cooperatives were established. The movement was particularly vocal and organized in at least two occasions: both during the *Fasci* mobilizations in the last years of the 19th century⁴ and in the years post-World War II (explored in detail in Author 2014). The memories of that movement, as well as narratives of violence against it, have been incorporated in the ways everyone in the contemporary antimafia co-ops thinks of their own commitment to their land plots and the general antimafia project. This includes, for instance, the negotiation of the memory of agrarian proletarians in the mafia massacre of Portella della Ginestra in 1947, widely believed to be the first of many ambiguous violent eruptions and one of many landed mafia-state coalitions⁵ (Author 2014, 22).

⁴ The *Fasci Siciliani dei Lavoratori* (Sicilian Workers Leagues) of the 1890s peasant movement are a central moment in the existing historiography of peasant mobilisation in Sicily. What is more, the *Fasci* was a reference point for my interlocutors' own way to historicize the antimafia movement's past today as 'the birth of the antimafia movement' (see also Santino 2009: 16). The *Fasci* contributed to a seminal change in the way agrarian labor relations are legislated in Sicily and Italy, as well as a reformulation of the island's relationship to the nation, one generation after Unification. The 'Corleone agreements', the first trade union collective contract in Italy, an outcome of this mobilisation, confirm the *Fasci*'s centrality in modern Italian history.

⁵ I am referring to the well known massacre of 13 innocent peasants from the area where I did fieldwork on the 1st of May demonstration.

The antimafia movement experienced a blow in Portella, but did not recede. Examples of antimafia activity in the 1960s and '70s are often associated with the Left and indeed the Far-Left, particularly in Sicily (as per the example of Peppino Impastato, see Vitale 1995). The earliest legislation linked to antimafia struggles to seize mafia land was passed in 1982⁶ (Law 646) and instigated the sequestration of assets belonging to members of the mafia. As the mafia's power in Sicily has been receding since the mid-1990s, following a series of mafia killings that provoked popular contempt for mafia organizations (Jamieson 2000, 127), its control over landed property is increasingly challenged by the Italian state. The state confiscations of mafia land unsettled the symbolic and material presence of land tenure for mafiosi. The extent of the antimafia coops' land tenure certainly does not correspond to the old latifundia and is in fact fragmented in many small plots, often vineyards (allowing for contact with mafia plots across many cases). Most of the land in the area is actually owned by smallholders, mainly viticulturers (a median of 7Ha of vineyard per household). The typical antimafia and mafia land plots bordering each other would be vineyards averaging 4Ha. To understand the dialectics of plot proximity between a state project and the processes permeating its local articulation, we should consider the story of these confiscations.

The project of antimafia land confiscations

⁶ The passing of the law ("Rognoni/La Torre" law) was itself partly an outcome of struggles in the Sicilian Left against the mafia (Pio La Torre was a PCI MP who was killed by Cosa Nostra). His collaboration with Rognoni also shows the convergence of the two major parties, *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC) and *Partito Comunista Italiano* en route to an antimafia political consensus slowly solidifying in the 1980s, to peak in the Second Republic post-1994.

In 1996, the antimafia non-governmental organization Libera (the largest umbrella NGO in Italy) collected more than one million signatures in support of a demand that ‘the mafia restored what was unjustly usurped’ (Libera 2010, 1; see also Frigerio and Pati 2006). Law 109 of 1996, which provided for the ‘social use of assets confiscated by the mafia’, followed soon after. It dictated that once a mafioso had been convicted, his assets, most often including property rights to land, would be handed over to the Ministry for Internal Affairs. After identification of the territorial jurisdiction where such assets were located, the Ministry would pass them on to the relevant municipality.

From 1999 onwards, in order to ensure that the confiscated land would be put to ‘social use’, much of it was eventually transferred to local agrarian antimafia cooperatives set up to cultivate wheat, vines, and legumes. A confiscated winery in Spicco Vallata also allowed for the production of wine. These cooperatives fall easily into conceptions of the social use of land because they adhere to constitutionally protected principles of Italian cooperativism and are non-profit organizations (Italian Constitution, Article 45). Accordingly, they are bolstered by the state alongside Libera. Assisting the marketing of products, Libera garners civic sympathy for the wider project and provides legal aid and advocacy. The NGO successfully promoted the cooperatives by explaining to the public that the land was allocated to co-ops ‘as they represented the community’ (Libera 2010, 3).

In Sicily, the Spicco Vallata valley, where this research⁷ was carried out,

⁷ The fieldwork for this research lasted 18 months (the latter part of 2008 and throughout 2009).

experienced the majority of these antimafia initiatives. Spicco Vallata's eight municipalities retained legal ownership of land plots and transferred the administration of their usufruct and adjunct rights to relevant cooperatives (Author 2014). From 1996 to the present day, the valley has been the foremost site in Italy for land reforms based on antimafia confiscations and restitutions. There are around ten such agrarian cooperatives operating on land confiscated from the mafia by the state. They are spread across Italy in regions as diverse as Sicily (operating in almost all provinces of the island), Campania, Puglia, Calabria, and indeed Lazio, and work on more than 1500 hectares of land (approximately 3750 acres⁸), mainly vineyards, as well as legume and dry farming. The province of Palermo alone, which includes the Spicco Vallata valley, hosts four of them. An ad hoc state institution oversaw the organisation of these reforms. This institution, titled 'Spicco Consortium', was presided over by Lucio Mandola, a fiery 45-year-old lawyer from Palermo. Mandola was selected on the grounds of his track record of antimafia convictions during his legal practice. Alongside him, three functionaries worked in the Consortium's seat, which was located in Palermo until 2010, when it moved to the Spicco Vallata village of San Giovanni.

The first land plot to be 'restored' – that is, allocated to a social cooperative – was a vineyard belonging to Totò 'The Beast' Riina, which was deeded to a cooperative named Lavoro e Altro. Three other co-ops, with names drawn from a repertoire of antimafia heroes (i.e., Falcone in 2001, Borsellino and Libermanima in 2006), were created after public competitions organised by the Spicco Consortium

⁸ Data from 2018.

as part of its plan to re-allocate the land ‘to the community’. The overall political situation, informed by the antimafia-sympathetic urban civil society mobilisations of the 1990s (Schneider and Schneider 2003; 2006), had created an apparent consensus over the importance of antimafia struggle among many local actors.

Mandola, along with other lawyers and legislators involved in the confiscation and distribution laws, told me that the confiscation law, as well as the general antimafia legislation, aimed to isolate the mafiosi, distancing them from local people and ‘excluding them from landholding, which was their symbolic power’. The Consortium and Libera insisted upon the formation of an antimafia community that never fully materialized in a consistent way. This was partly due to the contacts that antimafia co-op members had established with mafiosi neighbors. The interesting development here is that, instead of isolating mafia proprietors, confiscations brought them in close proximity to people committed to ‘doing antimafia’. As Enzo, a manual laborer and member of the Falcone co-op, said, ‘Plot boundaries are an issue made of people, not just borders... they are what people make of them’.

To understand the complexities related to new land allocation and administration and the neighborhood conditions thereof, it is worth considering the nature of the confiscations law, which did not apply to all land. The agricultural tracts considered may have had different histories of acquisition, but in local contextual terms they fell into two broad categories. Certain land tracts came to a mafia family as dowry or through the legitimate savings of the mafioso himself; in local discourse, this is typically described as *familiare* (family) land. But other tracts were acquired by a mafioso as a result of his illicit activities, such as

extortion or money laundering, and are defined as *propria* (own) land. It was only the latter form of land that was subject to confiscation.

Using drug or extortion racket money, mafiosi tended to buy all the tracts surrounding their original familial land to raise their property holdings and social clout. As the outer circles had been acquired through drug money, they were confiscated. The antimafia cooperatives therefore ‘ringed in’ the mafia in the propertied landscape, since mafiosi had their legitimately acquired “family” land in the center of a series of concentric circles of property. This situation allowed for constant interaction between antimafia cooperative members and mafiosi through the contiguous land plots subject to each group’s control.

The antimafia agrarian cooperatives were not uniform: although in theory working ‘for the community’, they were internally stratified. Social divisions within them reflect a history of social relations that predate the co-ops. A team of manual workers from the villages of Spicco Vallata constituted the majority of the members; a team of graduate office workers from Palermo served as the managers. Most workers⁹ had long histories of agrarian labour on mafiosi’s lands, as well as memories of social relations with mafiosi. The managers, on the other hand, had clerical and management jobs in the small offices that the three co-ops shared in the village of San Giovanni – the ‘antimafia headquarters’, as they called it. Almost all of them commuted every morning from Palermo and rarely, if ever, visited the land plots. Managers and workers interacted in the uncomfortable

⁹ In an economy where landholding and wage-work were often mixed, the local worker-members had cultivated small tracts of land (mainly vineyards) and worked for wages in agrarian settings for generations.

coexistence of family and confiscated land in the Sicilian landscape, as both were exposed to proximity and thus degrees of familiarity with mafiosi. Their reactions to these contacts with mafiosi were conditioned, to some extent, on each team's social background. Worker-members generally had a more immediate understanding of plots and mafiosi neighbors. Instead of focusing on these intra-cooperative divisions, however, I show how other, more stark divisions (mafia vs antimafia) can be nuanced through land plot neighbourhood, and it is indeed the cooperative agrarian workers that experienced this condition of unintended contact with "the mafia"¹⁰. Two vignettes from this experience can offer an entry point to appreciate the plots' dynamics.

The story of two land tracts

'Familiare' land: the story of Antonia Bareto's plot

The Bareto family has been central to the history of Spicco Vallata, and indeed Sicily itself, since the 1950s or earlier. Their patrilineal genealogy produced three generations of leading figures of Cosa Nostra, Sicily's mafia. This patriline came to an end with Giovanni Bareto, who was condemned to life imprisonment in 1999 for the murder of over 150 people and for the partial control of the mafia organization's global heroin trafficking during the 1980s and early 1990s. The Baretos owned plots of land near their now-abandoned home on the outskirts of

¹⁰ I have focused on the inner class divisions of the cooperatives, as they reflect different experience of the local territory and history elsewhere, exploring for instance different associations of kinship (Author 2017a) or discursive techniques (Author 2019). Here, these class differences provide a backdrop to my argument as well as a layer of complexity to the ethnographic analysis, but are not my focal point.

San Giovanni. Antonia Bareto, wife of mafioso and clan leader Bernardo, inherited the vineyards on this land from her father (a non-mafioso). She then handed them to her two sons: Giovanni and Vincenzo, both mafiosi, who were arrested in 1996 (Giovanni had already been convicted in absentia). The vineyards had not been confiscated because their mother was not part of the mafia, and thus her assets did not derive from ‘mafia activity’. The land was therefore deemed to be *familiare* (familial) property.

Adamo and Nicola, both locals, recalled a time in the mid-1990s when they worked together there on the harvest and agreed that the plots had, until recently, been very productive. They told me of their experiences working the land and of the relationship they had established with their employers. Although this relationship was tenuous due to their employers’ involvement in violent crime and drug trafficking, Adamo and Nicola reminisced about that time with nostalgia, noting how beautiful a vineyard it used to be and how well the family cared for it. Both men remarked what ‘a pity’ it was that, although not confiscated, this vineyard now lay uncultivated.

Antonia Bareto never involved herself in managing the vineyard, even after Giovanni was imprisoned. Adamo explained that “the mother could not cultivate this *familiare* plot, which she felt belonged to her son”. I enquired further as to what the workers’ designation of this plot as ‘*familiare*’ meant. Palermitan lawyers and the Spicco Consortium managers responsible for overseeing the confiscations project explained to me that the term ‘familial’ implied belonging to the family unit. The term referred to plots that had not been confiscated, since it had been

proven that the mafioso owner had acquired them through means other than the ‘usurping’ entailed in ‘mafia accumulation activity’ (Frigerio and Pati 2006: 19 and 59). Inheritance and dowry were the main techniques by which mafiosi acquired land tracts with *familiare* status. In the case discussed above, Antonia Bareto had bequeathed the legal title to a male child (a mafioso).

Adamo and Nicola are linked to this story of land ownership through two kinds of relations: antimafia co-op membership, on the one hand, and a history of labour relations with the Baretos, on the other. As the new overseers of a neighbouring plot which shared a boundary with the Bareto plots, and as antimafia co-op members, they found themselves in a surprisingly twofold condition, linked both to the cooperative (as co-op members) and to the Baretos (as ex-workers).

The co-existence of mafia *familiare* land alongside their confiscated plots, I soon found out, yielded surprising continuities in local practices. I shall consider further how familiarity and neighborhood belong to continuing histories of social relations through the story of the plots of Mimmo Torinese, another local mafioso.

‘Propria’ land: at the boundary, with Torinese

When convicted, a mafioso has to prove that the origin of his land assets is licit in order to retain them. If he cannot support his claim that he acquired a piece of land lawfully, the property is presumed to be the outcome of his mafia activity and is thus associated with his mafia membership. In contrast to the category *familiare*, this is locally called *proprietà propria* (‘own property’). Land that falls into this category is confiscated because, in the absence of proof to the contrary, it is legally

registered as acquired through illicit means.

Mimmo Torinese was a renowned farmer. Like many of the village mafiosi, he had invested racket money in buying land that was adjacent to his original familial land in a conscious strategy to expand. Some of his plots had since been confiscated and were now managed by the Falcone cooperative, while others still remained in his family's possession due to their *familiare* status. Some cooperative members had vivid memories of working for the Torinese family. Many of these Torinese plots bordered on plots confiscated from the Torineses and were now managed by the antimafia cooperatives.

Torinese owned a vineyard in the territory of Reale (a Spicco Vallata village) that was used as a front to launder drug money in the mid-1980s. After the downfall of the Baretos, the mafioso was the San Giovanni mafia leader from 1996 until his conviction in absentia in 1999, when the land plot was confiscated and became property of the state. The Reale municipality then transferred its usufruct rights to the Falcone antimafia cooperative under a renewable free lease contract. Additionally, a related winery building located amongst these vineyards was finally confiscated from Mimmo Torinese in 2007. In March 2010, it became Passi, the cooperative's winery, bottling under the Falcone label.

Alongside the confiscated land and winery was a Torinese *familiare* tract that had not been confiscated. Early one April morning, Enzo and Piero, two local worker-members from the Falcone co-op, were working in this part of the Falcone vineyard just a few yards away from the Torinese *familiare* plot. Suddenly, Enzo's cellphone rang. It turned out to be Mimmo Torinese's 40-year-old son Ciccio, just

out of prison, complaining in strong Sicilian dialect and demanding to meet with someone from the Falcone co-op to discuss a problem with plot boundaries.

The incident caused distress amongst the Falcone managers. The 35-year-old president, Luca, and the vice-president, Mina, were particularly upset. They were opposed to a meeting with land plot neighbors whom they considered ‘unable to reason with’. They insisted that the cooperative call in the police; even if there were to be a meeting to discuss property boundaries, they wanted the *Carabinieri* (the Italian military police) to be present. ‘Our boundaries are not to be negotiated at a mafioso’s phone call. These lands are not *just* plots; the state is invested in them’, Luca asserted to me. However, after they saw that the workers were adamant that there should be a meeting with the mafioso neighbor on this issue, Luca and Mina acquiesced. The workers argued that they could understand the situation better than ‘those in the office’, as they experienced working alongside the cooperatives’ neighbors (*vicini*).

The meeting was arranged for the next morning at 6 a.m. It took place at the exact boundary line between the Torinese’s family land and their confiscated plot. The facial features of the mafioso were barely visible in the dim light, causing some distress to the co-op members. However, the meeting went well. When I asked him about it later that day, Enzo reported, ‘He [Torinese] was well-mannered. He was a gentleman, like these people [mafiosi] often are’.

The constitution of neighborhood here is formed through recognizing difference, but also accepting contact between proximate realities – as workers and mafiosi are part of the same rural locality, sharing life conditions. This locality is

immensely stratified, and one should acknowledge in the semiotics of Enzo's words themselves how this is so: the word *signore* [gentleman] that he used has strong connotations of landed gentry in Sicily. Torinese was indeed a *signore* of this sort.

Nicola juxtaposed his remembrance of the 'past continuous unity of these plots' with the current experience of working a now-fragmented domain of confiscated and *familiare* plots. In these tracts, the historical connections of land had been reconfigured, nevertheless leaving behind ongoing, lively neighborhood relations between mafia and antimafia. For those cooperative members who, like Nicola, remembered working on the same plots for the old mafiosi owners, this sense of a 'lost past' was intensified. The remembrance of the land plots' unity in the pre-confiscation period reinforced a belief that the confiscated plots' boundaries were less rigid in practice than in legal discourse.

However, this past is not idealized, and co-op members are attentive to the land boundary as a divider between their present and a past where mafia could be more ostensibly violent than now. This temporal division does not mean mafia is annihilated, but rather that its contemporaneous existence alongside the antimafia is recognized in land property categories. Enzo and Piero realized that Ciccio Torinese *did* have a rightful claim over the disputed land between the two properties. Ciccio proved this to them by providing the relevant legal documents during the meeting. Surprised, the co-op members checked them and admitted that the mafioso was legally right; they had, albeit accidentally, extended their plot's boundaries, thereby trespassing on their neighbor's *familiare* property. Both Ciccio

Torinese's polite ways, and the fact that the co-op members had past or ongoing work relations in his plots, carried a common understanding on the sharing of the land boundary. Mafia and antimafia actors at once acknowledge the boundary as a separator between their different realities and engaged in contact over it. Their shared understanding of the boundary has even legal reductions, and is a matter of initial conflict and eventual agreement.

Uncomfortable proximity: moral borders and lines of contact

This idea about the land boundary was conditioned, in the case of Torinese, by the contiguity of co-ops' plots with the mafioso's, as well as by the contact with Ciccio Torinese himself. It is through such contacts that people of the cooperatives' manual workforce team actually experienced the boundaries of the confiscated plots as lines of contact. To recall Enzo's statement, land plot proximity was an 'issue made of people, not just borders'.

In some cases, management members thought that it was impossible to establish any genuine contact with mafiosi neighbors. Furthermore, they thought that the boundaries between the *familiare* and the confiscated plots needed to be defended. Like the borders of a state, these boundaries represented a clear division (between mafia and antimafia), which would be threatened by paths of social contact connecting the un-confiscated and confiscated land. For most members of the co-op management, the mafiosi belonged, as the Falcone co-op's vice-president Mina told me, to a 'different universe', and were not suitable for moral judgment. In defending physical land boundaries and invoking the authority of

law, Mina communicated her belief in this utter difference, protecting what she saw as the moral world of the cooperatives. For this reason, the general belief was that court action was the most appropriate solution to all problems regarding disputes with the mafia. Demonstrating a firm, normative antimafia morality was, after all, part and parcel of the ideology of co-op administrators, an issue that often raised ambiguity within the co-ops (see Author 2018, 173).

Some Falcone managers spelled out this radical difference with neighbors in a language of war. They stated that dealing with plot boundaries meant ‘defending borders’. Learning to navigate these borders was a main skill that co-op administrators learnt on the job, interacting with mafiosi in San Giovanni (although never in Palermo) (see Author 2019: 91-93). Sometimes, they explicitly asserted that ‘the Italian state was represented’ by, and within, the confines of their plots, thereby marking *familiare* land not just as non-state, but as threatening, anti-state land. As Silvio, the president of Falcone, 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 Sicily’. When I asked why the Italian flag was waving at the inauguration of the Passi winery on confiscated grounds, an impassioned manager told me, ‘Because we are Italians. And they [mafiosi] are not’.

Although they did not vilify the mafiosi and did see them as co-villagers, manual workers also saw the co-ops’ plots as markers of difference. Like the co-op managers, workers sometimes relied on a warlike rhetoric to describe their proximity to mafia, using phrases like ‘peaceful coexistence’ and ‘diplomacy’. In fact, co-op worker-members felt they knew what ‘life at the border’ was better

than the managers. Enzo himself had told me that ‘the kids in the office do not know how it is to face the mafiosi every day, there, at the front of the battle [*al fronte*]’.

The above phrases constitute a range of metaphors which imply that the process of cultivating the confiscated land right by the mafioso neighbor was akin to experiencing the frontline of a conflict. At the same time, however, manual workers felt some degree of familiarity with mafiosi and insisted that the administration’s ideas about the people at the other side of the ‘front’ as strangers were out of kilter. As Adamo told me, ‘We, people of the area’s villages, have been brought up close to our current neighbors, next door to them’.

When I asked the Carabinieri marshal from San Giovanni about the Torinese event during one of our encounters, he underlined the idea of *convivere* to me: ‘The co-ops and mafia need to learn to live together’ (*bisogna imparare il convivere*). He argued that the current good neighborhood conditions between co-op workers and mafiosi were an indication of how innocuous the antimafia was: ‘The cooperatives don’t mean anything bad for the mafiosi; they don’t bother them. The simple fact that they are working right next to Torinese, and he offers them water, for instance, means that the mafiosi are just not bothered and see the antimafia simply as neighbors’.

Managers thought of plot boundaries as borders for their moral universes, while workers did not believe that their plots secured a universe and thus did not discount the possibility of contact with mafiosi. Indeed, to a certain degree, they recognized mafiosi as valid and, most centrally, as people who belonged to the

same universe as they did. As a result, the Consortium's attempts to establish, via the confiscations, a local separation of mafiosi from antimafia people – a '*spaccatura*' (split), as Leoluca Orlando, the antimafia mayor of Palermo, once said – was incomplete.

Rather than arguing in favor of smooth proximities, mafia-antimafia relations should be contextualized in a long history of violence, which provides the backdrop to the current truce (but not reconciliation) between mafia and antimafia over their shared boundaries¹¹. Following the marshal's point would trivialize the 'living together' situation of conviviality. Attention is needed, instead, to the wider history of a tense spatial proximity of non-mafia-affiliated people with mafia, especially in the case of the antimafia agrarian co-ops' members.

In one occasion, Adamo and Enzo underlined to me that the co-op plots they were working on at that moment were once 'covered in blood'. That tract of land was where trade unionist Placido Rizzotto gave a passionate speech to the gathered peasants before they occupied the estate, facing with mafia's *gabelloti* violence. The mafia assassinated Rizzotto in 1948 (Paternostro 1994). Not far from that plot, the police in 1994 discovered the body of a small boy who was strangled by a local mafioso.

Conclusion: Neighborhood and shared boundaries

¹¹ At the same time, they should also be contextualized in local networks where kinship offers a major lens of local understanding (an issue tackled at length in Author 2017a, as well as in some ethnographic detail in Author 2019: 95)

To know one's land means also to know the landscape with its multiple temporal identity layers, akin to a palimpsest. This essay has explored what takes place on and around the boundary border - that symbolic, yet normative, line - separating and uniting bounded fields in a shared social landscape.

People of clearly divergent social categories often occupy the same village spaces, evoking social memory of a violent past (e.g. Sorge 2015a). However, the kinship histories built into land inheritance (the matrilineal *familiare* land, in particular), can inform surprising proximities between mafia and antimafia. The Sicilian lens employed to scrutinize the impositions of boundaries allows us to reconsider the relationship between seemingly bounded entities: two micro-communities may live in relative peace together in the locality, while poised sharply against each other on the national sphere.

The mafia and antimafia find themselves in an extreme situation in which they are the most radically opposed social groups of a peasant community and also those most closely sharing geographical proximity. This paradox allows us to appreciate bounded entities as micro-communities that spill onto each other and become defined by their opposites. Antimafia actors are aware of their neighbor as a potential culprit of violence, and some of this enmity is not just imagined; the antimafia people, with whom I have spent most time in the field, would often identify mafiosi neighbors as (erstwhile or potential) villains. The materiality of this neighborhood enmity is rooted in recent acts of violence, but also in sharp changes (especially in the landed property regime) that followed such acts.

It is this internal differentiation (boundaries within the community itself) that some Italianist anthropologists have noted elsewhere (Mahmud 2015; Sorge 2015b). It is a division underpinned by a boundary, but not confined in the bounded entity of the land plot. Outside the bounded entity of the plot and its symbolic weight (“antimafia”), sociality continues unhindered as feuding groups come to unexpected close proximity. The village is a space and a temporal community where both sides of the spectrum (mafia/antimafia) have much to share, despite differences, as (proximate) opposites intersecting each other (Blok 1997: 49) – and where those representing national narratives (antimafia administrators) are sometimes bounded out.

Both the space and time of setting boundaries are inscribed in the historical landscape that people evoke through shared memories (like the ones Adamo and Nicola had about the Barbetos). The violence evoked in some Italian landscapes suggests a counter-narrative to that of specific national history: “the past sits in places”, and some of these places can be uncomfortable to bystanders or even to people of the community (Sorge 2015b). It was certainly uncomfortable to antimafia co-op administrators like Mina, for instance, who reasoned (with the state) that mafiosi were aliens to the area, bounded out of “new Sicily’s moral universe” (Mina’s words).

The reaffirmation of bounded identity is thus a matter of internal contestation in such communities, which are by no way monolithic or homogenous. Such reaffirmations produce narratives of the temporal positionality of our subjects’ place-in-the-world. The empirical reality of people like Adamo,

Nicola and Enzo, is often positioned slightly outside the state's history, a temporal area that seems to impose one specific reading of the landscape over people's past(s) (Sorge 2015a: 157; cf Stacul 2005: 819).

The enmity of these interlocutors with mafiosi is informed and largely constructed by (mainly national) inimical categories of subjects who share some elements of social life in the village. Mafiosi and antimafiosi share some sociality in the rural area outside the village, because they happen to share land plot boundaries. The categorical contradiction mafia/antimafia, existing on the national level, is sometimes resolved on the local, due to the liminal life on the boundary. What the above Sicilian stories show us therefore is that the shared memory of a violent history is recast in sharing boundary plots as markers of separation, but also as points of contact. Antimafia confiscations brought together antithetical social actors, neighbors that share more similarities than conventionally understood. A project designed to eradicate the bases of mafia power resulted in much convivial conditions (*convivere*) with the mafia.

This unintended mafia/antimafia closeness of 'living together' calls for revisiting certain ideas of difference in proximity. It allows us to appreciate how state projects of land change, such as the antimafia, operate on the assumption of a moral unity of cause, which they aspire to realize on grounds they cannot always count on or control. This way, boundaries between land plots of enemies can turn into sites of encounter. The tensions and contradictions that emerge out of neighborhood socialities allow us to assess difference where people's emplaced experiences are shaped by their shared boundaries.

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Comments

General

The central argument of the paper, that the physical borders marking the property boundaries of the anti-mafia cooperatives established on the lands the state confiscated from convicted mafiosi create new points of contact between individual, communities, and the state, is interesting, and adds an important dimension to our understanding of the workings of the mafia and anti-mafia movements.

Before the paper is published, I urge the author to consider:

- 1) to clearly state the argument within the first 3 pages, and more clearly link it to a theoretical framework
- 2) consider the important work these boundaries do carving out new visible physical and moral spaces
- 3) expand the discussion of how these borders reconfigure social relations, and in particular, consider the significance of kin-networks and local allegiances;
- 4) revise for language.

1)Argument and theoretical framework.

Argument: At the end of page 2, or beginning of page 3, please clearly articulate the central argument of the article. Explain what an inquiry into the effects of land boundaries does, not just "postulate a need," but tell the reader what information is gained from an analysis of boundaries.

One of the central tenets the author lays out, that there is a paradox created by the state expropriation of mafia lands needs more explanation. The existence of enemy neighbors does not seem like a paradox, something self-contradictory, or absurd, it seems that what the author is pointing out is that the policies of state expropriation of mafia lands may weaken the economic foundation of the mafia, but does not erase the complicated communal and kin-ties that mark relations between the mafia and antimafia worlds. The creation of antimafia cooperatives seems to make the connections between these worlds, the grey space, if you will more visible.

Theoretical frame

There are many theories laid out here, but I am unclear how they are related, or why they are significant for the argument.

The emplace, as a topic heading, does not make sense to me. Perhaps boundaries and belonging would be a more accurate review of the

It seems that the author is playing off multiple theoretical frameworks yet it is unclear how these are connected. This is what I am seeing:

1. Geographical theories about space, place, and the cultural constructions of space. How boundaries are linked to temporal ideas, and delineate notions of insider/outsider public/private.

Commented [A1]: I reordered some of the research priorities in the introduction, especially in the last paragraph of the first section, to make the point underlined here more explicit.

Commented [A2]: I have embedded this very useful point in the penultimate paragraph of the introduction's first section.

Commented [A3]: Apart from the changes in phrasing in the first 5 pages, see also the new abstract, which now clarifies the argument more than in the earlier version, as well as integrates the different points in one framework: A focus on the border shared between plots managed by social groups assumed to be antagonistic, allows to examine the germinal conflictual and ordering relations emerging between their respective owners. See also p. 3

Commented [A4]: Changed accordingly

Commented [A5]: This aspect has been reduced considerably. I did not cite or discuss geographers in the original version of the document either but I have made sure to show that I am not interested in geographical theory per se in this essay.

- Community theories about place and space: I'm not sure what the long history of ethnographic theory that is referred to on p. 4. It is not the Schneiders, or Eric Wolf. It seems like Wolf, Barthe and Schneiders, can be used to illustrate the specific ways in which agrotowns create notions of belonging, and create particular ties with the wider worlds (region, nation, etc.). In short, could the author expand on the meaning of boundedness and offer concrete examples of how these borders shape local social relations and local/regional/national relations.
- Class hierarchies. It seems that the third frame looks at how physical land boundaries shape social hierarchies and power structures, and yet
- Could the author make the links between these different theoretical frames more explicit? How do these ideas of place and emplacement (and on a side note, how does emplaced contact differ from belonging) specifically help us to understand the significance of the antimafia/mafia borders created by the land reclamation projects?

2) New physical and moral spaces:

1. The discussion of the land confiscations and antimafia cooperatives provides important historical background, but in its current state the discussion is unclear. Could the author revise the history of land confiscations and antimafia cooperatives to make the tie between the creation of the landed estates and the rural mafia clearer. Perhaps, it would be useful to spend a paragraph or so on the late 19th c. and early 20th c. land movements and the ways in which these movements consolidated ties between the state and Mafiosi, and created antimafia spaces prior to 1996. This would help readers who are less familiar with the geography of the mafia in Sicily and the difference/ties between rural and urban mafia.

2. The visibility of anti-mafia space within a mafia world. There is a big jump from the 1950s-1960s, to the 1990s. A bit of historical context on the land confiscations might be helpful. Is there any connection here between the antimafia movements and the student movements in the south?

3) Borders and social relations

The last 10 pages of the article where the author focuses on their research and interviews is very strong. My only comment here is that perhaps more could be made of the ways in which kin-networks, local allegiances, and class allegiances play out in fostering relations between local residents and local residents and the state.

4) Language

At times the word choice and syntax make it difficult to understand the meaning. Stay away from jargon, such as transversal, or bounding in quotes. Why is it in quotes, what does it mean? Linguistic confusion is more troubling in the theoretical and historiographical discussion, and it may reflect a deeper problem in articulating the significance of the work. Once the argument is clarified some of the linguistic confusion might disappear.

Commented [A6]: Instead, I am indeed interested in the ethnographic and historical discussion of space and place among recent Italianist authors, especially anthropologists. This naturally leads me to issues of co-existence of different communities in shared places.

Commented [A7]: Both in the intro (see p.5) and in the conclusion, I argue how showing the local specifics of doing antimafia nuances the antimafia national narrative.

Commented [A8]: Please note that "boundedness" does not appear in the text, at least in this final version. It is not a term I aim to theorise but rather a specific empirical condition, the situation of being bounded in delineated land borders.

Commented [A9]: While there are explicit references to class (see p. 8), this is not a focus of the essay. I have tackled this issue at length in some of the essays of mine I cite (see for instance p. 22) as well as in two others. I also explicitly refer to inner co-op divisions while underscoring this is not the axis of analysis here in p. 15. (as well as footnote 10)

Commented [A10]: While power structures within the cooperatives exist, and agrarian workers are more exposed to the specifics this ethnography discusses, here, these class differences provide a backdrop to my argument but are not my focal point. Rather, I show how other, more stark divisions (mafia vs antimafia) can be nuanced through land plot neighborhood.

Commented [A11]: I believe the subtle reshaping of the section "boundaries and belonging" now addresses this question.

Commented [A12]: Indeed, this is very important. However, given that the essay already exceeds 8000w, the JMIS limit, I thought it would be wiser to refer to already published work of mine where this issue is tackled in length— published no less in JMIS (2014). See my references in p.9 of the current text where I also briefly refer to the Fasci of that period. See also the added footnote I put (pp. 9-10).

Commented [A13]: I have added four sentences as well as a long footnote in the beginning of the first paragraph p.10 addressing this gap.

Commented [A14]: See abstract and introduction –pp. 4 and 5 top- as well as conclusion –p25- where this is addressed more explicitly now.

Commented [A15]: See additions and references in p 22, but also existing references to relations in pp. 24-25. See also added footnote 9 in p. 24.

Commented [A16]: Among other revisions for language, I have also changed all orthography from UK to US.

Commented [A17]: Throughout the document, I have dramatically cut down on adjectives, ambiguous phrasing and jargon.

Reviewer #2: Please add comments you don't mind the author seeing.

Suggested title: The Shared Boundary: Where Sicilian Mafia and Antimafia Land Holdings Meet

P.1 "mafioso Riina" Should Be (SB) "mafioso Salvatore Riina"

P.2 Check the date for (Wolf 1987), it's not in the bib.

p. 3 bot. "very close to the fields..." The towns are surrounded by the fields, but the peasants often had long commutes to reach them.

p. 4 maybe "closeness from it" SB "distance from it"
"ethnographic theory" SB "ethnographic examples"

p. 6 "banditry" wasn't mentioned earlier in text, and maybe it's not necessary here.
"agrotown" -- on p. 3, "agrotown" was hyphenated. Delete "technology".

p.7. Sentence "The gabehloti landholding..." could be more clearly stated
"and even exercised..." SB "and is even exercised..."

p.8 Third paragraph could refer to mafia manipulation of the land reform in order to acquire vignette.
Last paragraph: :Both as locals and as long distance businessmen, mafiosi used violence as a major resource in establishing..."

p. 10 Perhaps explain what happened at "Portella della Ginestra"

p. 11 "antimafia cooperatives to cultivate..." SB "antimafia cooperatives, set up to cultivate..."

p. 13, second paragraph: "instead of isolating mafia proprietors, confiscations brought them in close proximity to people..."
bottom: "tracts may have different..." SB "tracts may have had different..." "Certain land tracts came to a mafia family..."

p. 14 top "But other tracts were acquired by a mafioso..."
second paragraph: "legitimately acquired "family" land in the center..."

p. 15 top: "from Palermo, where they lived, and rarely..."
end of the paragraph: "the plots' taxonomies." could be "the plots' dynamics."

p. 21 second paragraph: "In fringe cases,..." SB "In some cases,..."

p. 22 Does it matter that the managers include women, while the workers were all male? How about differences in age and education?

p. 25 2nd paragraph: "land property regime" SB "landed property regime"

Commented [A18]: I would rather keep the original subtitle that suggests the broader ruminations of what is already clear in the title to be the focal point of the article (the boundary). I am however willing to discuss the title again, if need be, with the editor and reviewers.

Commented [A19]: Corrected

Commented [A20]: Corrected to 1986

Commented [A21]: Corrected

Commented [A22]: Both corrected.

Commented [A23]: Changed

Commented [A24]: Changed

Commented [A25]: Corrected, plus references added to back the argument.

Commented [A26]: Added footnote 5 – see also reference to my previous work.

Commented [A27]: Corrected as suggested

Commented [A28]: Corrected as suggested

Commented [A29]: Ditto.

Commented [A30]: Corrected as suggested

Commented [A31]: Ditto

Commented [A32]: Kept "if ever". More recent fieldwork in 2018 verified this.

Commented [A33]: Corrected.

Commented [A34]: Corrected as suggested

Commented [A35]: Corrected as suggested

p. 26 "In island Italy," unclear -- do you mean "inland" or "mainland"?

Commented [A36]: Corrected: some Italian landscapes

p. 27 1st paragraph "much convivial conditions" SB "convivial occasions"

"grounds they cannot always count on" could be "grounds they cannot always count on or control."

Commented [A37]: Corrected as suggested

You could refer here to your own published accounts regarding two related topics, and/or expand on them here: (1) How are the co-op worker/members recruited? What degree of moral antimafia must they demonstrate? (2) Do co-op workers interact with mafiosi in town (away from the fields and vignette)? In what contexts?

Commented [A38]: See first addition in p. 22

Commented [A39]: See second addition in p. 22.

Theodoros Rakopoulos is associate professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Oslo. Based on ethnography in Sicily, he has published extensively on mafia and antimafia, cooperatives, talk and silence, and food politics. He is author of *From clans to co-ops: Confiscated mafia land in Sicily* (Berghahn 2017), as well as editor of *The global life of austerity* (Berghahn, 2018) and co-editor of *Towards an anthropology of wealth* (Routledge 2018) book. He has also worked in Greece and Cyprus and is currently authoring a book on the commodification of citizenship.

Abstract [200w]

Based on the assumed antithesis between mafia and antimafia in rural Sicily, this essay explores boundaries as shared points of conflict and sociality. It ethnographically explores the condition of neighborhood between land plots that belong to mafiosi on the one hand and to antimafia cooperatives on the other. The uncomfortable proximity of enemies that ensues, allows us to reconsider boundaries as symbols of separation. As markers of difference, Sicilian boundaries are informed by a legacy of violence imprinted on the landscape, and divide people in bounded categories. However, they are also defined by kinship-based inheritance histories, while they provide points of contact and buttress an unexpected spatial and moral order of neighborhood relations. A focus on the border shared between plots managed by social groups assumed to be antagonistic, allows to examine the germinal conflictual and ordering relations emerging between their respective owners. I show how land boundaries can be markers of both proximity and difference, even between opposed groups who find themselves owning adjoining plots of land. I argue that the boundary underpinning such divisions can bring the feuding groups of mafia and antimafia in proximity, rather than keeping them confined in bounded entities.

Keywords

Sicily, mafia, antimafia, neighborhood, land, proximity

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The shared boundary: Sicilian mafia and antimafia land

Introduction

The place

Although most of their revenue comes from racketeering and illegal trade of narcotics, many contemporary Sicilian mafiosi have been landowners for as much as three or four generations (Blok 1988; Santino 2007). In the Palermitan hinterland of Spicco Vallata,¹ mafia families held large areas of land divided into a number of plots (Lupo 2011). Given the illegal acquisition of these plots, many were confiscated during the 2000s, and were eventually transferred to so-called ‘antimafia’ cooperatives as part of a broader combined civil society and state effort to counteract mafia power (Schneider and Schneider 2005). Since the mid-1990s, Sicilian state agents, civil society activists, and actors associated with agrarian cooperatives have led the process of transferring land confiscated from the mafia, ‘back to the community’. This has resulted in a reversal of land ownership once appropriated by mafia (Barbieri 2005: 87; Frigerio and Pati 2006: 15).

The antimafia co-ops project (as the aforementioned process is known) seeks to amend the injustices that mafia has perpetrated in the area through giving land to agrarian cooperatives (Libera 2010). As a result, many co-op members ended up sharing borders with the many mafiosi who still cultivated the neighboring plots (their ‘family’ land) that had not been confiscated. Sicily thus

¹ Like all names of places and people throughout the text, this is a pseudonym used in order to respect and protect interlocutors’ safety and confidentiality. Exceptions are made for very public figures, like the mafioso Salvatore Riina.

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4 offers an interesting case study of supposedly radical differences between land
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6 tenants who are nominal enemies but are nevertheless forced to work in close
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8 proximity. The policies of state expropriation of mafia lands may weaken the
9
10 economic foundation of the mafia, but do not erase the complicated communal and
11
12 kin ties that mark relations between the mafia and antimafia worlds. Instead, in
13
14 some instances, agents of mafia and antimafia are now in closer geographical
15
16 proximity than ever. The creation of antimafia cooperatives seems to make the
17
18 connections between these worlds, and the grey space between them (see Author
19
20 2018, Pine 2015), more visible.
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26 Focusing on this paradox, I here discuss the unexpected and confused
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28 conditions created as a result of the land reallocation in a Sicilian valley. I
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30 specifically focus on the contiguity between land plots registered under different
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32 property statuses, now managed by social groups assumed to be antagonistic. A
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34 focus on the border shared between such plots, allows to examine the emerging
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36 between their respective owners. My aim is to show how land boundaries can be
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38 markers of both proximity and difference, even between supposedly antagonistic
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40 groups who find themselves owning adjoining plots of land.
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48 **Boundaries and belonging**

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50 Barth's observation that policing boundaries has a strategic character –based on
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52 his understanding of identity as strategically enacted- gained considerable traction
53
54 in Anthropology and beyond (Barth 1969). In rural contexts, Eric Wolf's idea that
55
56 peasant communities closed themselves in response to economic and social
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58 changes wrought by external forces, has informed understandings of historical
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4 connectedness and closeness (Wolf 1986). The “closed corporate peasant
5
6 community” can, in his work, be understood as a protective device. In an Italian
7
8 context, Wolf (with Cole) have comparatively explored the “hidden” boundary of
9
10 culture, imprinted on landscapes that share the same ecology (1974). The
11
12 corporate community allowed for a smooth operation of social contract, as the
13
14 varied neighborhood relations within it do not involve feuds. In the Italian
15
16 *entroterra*, “the landlocked inland sea of boundness” (Sorge 2015a: 26), this
17
18 condition has resulted in a historical process of constructing fortified settlements
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20
21 in various areas.
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26
27 In Sicily, these rural settlements (agrotowns) have been compact, densely
28
29 populated, and organized around the ethos of assembling laborers, who end up
30
31 residing very close to each other according to latifundism standards (Blok 2000:
32
33 136–54). In fact, Schneiders’ first major work drew on Wolf’s historical
34
35 anthropology to argue that the mafia’s broker capitalism, and certain cultural codes
36
37 continuous with mafia, were both expressions of such places’ association with the
38
39 world, as well as distance from it (1976).
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44
45 The work that goes into “bounding” can divide village and pastoral life
46
47 (Mientjes 2010), or can indeed historically differentiate the lived village space of
48
49 circular history from the linearity of its national ambience (Stacul 2005). Such
50
51 current work in Anthropology reminds us of how the public sphere formulates
52
53 over a collective identity sense suggested by the past (Sorge 2015b; cf Kertzer
54
55 1974).
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4 In urban ethnographies of Italy, scholars also trace the processes of setting
5
6 and unsettling boundaries. Such works discuss boundaries that are imposed on
7
8 and/or embraced by ethnographic subjects. Indicatively, shared boundaries of
9
10 conspiracy, built amidst the public sphere, protect networks of mutual secrets, and
11
12 constitute a form of interpersonal community protection (Mahmud 2015).
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14
15 Boundaries can moreover be the outcomes of a struggle to maintain a distinct area
16
17 as a shared space for living, against encroaching waves of speculation on urban
18
19 land (Herzfeld 2009).
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24 Departing from the above ethnographic examples, I am interested in
25
26 exploring how the boundary, as a shared marker, might not only be suggesting
27
28 closeness, but also connectedness between the groups implicated. This is not least
29
30 due to the fact that the shaping of land plot boundaries in Sicily is not only due to
31
32 mafia violence but also to kinship micro-histories, that yield fascinating,
33
34 unexpected results of proximity between “mafia” and “antimafia”. Exploring the
35
36 boundary between people inimical to each other, emplaced in spaces of marked
37
38 difference (in this case: mafia and antimafia land) alerts us to ensuing socialities
39
40 and memories that they can both share. This is particularly pertinent given nested
41
42 ideas on how boundaries –and neighborhood around them- are ideal concepts for
43
44 the ethnographic analysis of relationality (Lamont and Molnár 2002). Here, John
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46 Davis’ comment on land disputes in Italy – ‘You cannot sue an acre: a boundary
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48 dispute is not a dispute with land but with people’ (1973, 157) – offers a helpful
49
50 insight.
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4 Setting boundaries is also a process that relates to the construction of
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7 “stereotypes” of cosmopolitans and localists, and local power structures vis-à-vis
8
9 wider ones (Verdery 2002; Sorge 2008). In Sicily, antimafia cosmopolitan
10
11 administrators had specific opinions about boundaries, which were in line with
12
13 those of the state² – but were not shared by their antimafia local(ist) companions. I
14
15 do not wish to argue that antimafia is a national narrative with no local
16
17 reverberations – in fact, below I stress the historical and present formations of the
18
19 antimafia movement. However, I do argue that the empirical circumstance of land
20
21 plot proximity locally, nuances the fixed categorization of stark contrast between
22
23 mafia and antimafia at the national level. Exploring this complexity illuminates the
24
25 specific experience of “doing antimafia” in rural Sicily. Spicco Vallata is an area
26
27 where state confiscations reshaped the fields of bounded mafia land. The violence,
28
29 but also the neighborhood sociality that emerged between these arrangements and
30
31 the local Sicilian notions of boundary (frequently non-congruent with state views)
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33 suggests that subjects in divided communities enact boundaries as both separators
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35 and points of contact.
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46 **Land confiscations and antimafia cooperatives**

47 *Violent agrarian roots*

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49 Attention to boundaries and their association with violence is indicative of the
50
51 ways we relate to history as violent imprint on landscapes (Lai 2000). Mafiosi are
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58 ² Opposition between mafia and antimafia has a longstanding history in Sicily, as
59 discussed in the work of Sicilian scholars (Lupo 2015; Santino 2015), and as I have
60 acknowledged from an anthropological perspective (see Author 2017b).
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4 foremost identified in terms of a specific ‘territory’ they control through
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6 intimidation and violence (Blok 2000, 88). In the Palermitan rural hinterland, this
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8 territory implied landed estates and the rise, especially since the 19th century, of
9
10 latifundism, a capitalist type of estate-based agrarian political economy (Schneider
11
12 and Schneider 1976, 7; see also Petruszewicz 1996). San Giovanni, the village
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14 where I did fieldwork, was founded in 1779 to host the largest number of people in
15
16 the smallest possible space. The inland Sicilian ‘agrotowns’ were densely
17
18 populated settlements, ‘peasant agglomerations’ that reflected the needs of
19
20 latifundist land tenure (Blok 1969; Schneider and Schneider 1976, 34; Blok 1988,
21
22 47).

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27
28 San Giovanni and the valley of Spicco Vallata in general, have experienced
29
30 the rise of the mafia, beginning in the mid-19th century, and have been a center of
31
32 Cosa Nostra activity since the 1980s. Despite recent claims to the contrary (Sabetti
33
34 2011, 22), the landed estates have been central to the making of the mafia, *à la*
35
36 Blok, although their gradual breakdown since the 1953 land reform has certainly
37
38 not contributed to its unmaking (Author 2017b).
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44 Rural mafia brokerage has a history of its own in Spicco Vallata, and in
45
46 Western Sicily more generally. The *gabellotti* landholding was a service to the
47
48 absentee landowners of the big Sicilian estates before the Italian land reform of
49
50 1953. In that respect, they occupied middlemen positions between different levels
51
52 of power, both local and broader, securing the landlords’ profits through violent
53
54 means of controlling the landless agrarian workforce (Blok 1988, 33). After the
55
56 breakdown of the estates and the distribution of land, the violent labor patrons
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4 (*gabellotti*), now acting as landowners in their own right, turned into brokers
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6 (*sensali*). In this system, mafia violence is fused with state power, merged with
7
8 state institutions (Palumbo 2009), and is even exercised in lieu of state violence
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10 (Author 2014a, 22; Author 2017b). San Giovanni-based historian Gioacchino
11
12 Nania notes that the San Giovanni *gabellotti* patrons soon became the local *burgisi*
13
14 (bourgeois) in the 1920s. They formed the Spicco Vallata agrarian middle classes
15
16 as they pocketed substantial parts of the profit made *and* maintained positions of
17
18 local power through violence, serving as the ‘public order in the area’ from the
19
20 mid-19th century onwards (Nania 2000, 131).
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26 Despite much discussion on mafias as urban phenomena, there is an
27
28 agrarian mafia operating as an ongoing and historical intimidating presence in
29
30 Sicilian everyday life. This mafia lives as a rural entity and functions largely as a
31
32 network of violent peasant entrepreneurs³ (Blok 1988). Mafiosi have an
33
34 entrepreneurial activity and reputation that extend far beyond their villages’
35
36 boundaries, as well as a situated, quotidian life enclosed by the boundaries of their
37
38 land plots. During the peak of their global capitalist endeavors (1985–1995), while
39
40 they controlled the global heroin traffic virtually as a monopoly, Spicco Vallata
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42 mafiosi remained thoroughly linked to their land and bounded to their villages
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44 (some, in fact, living in bunkers in village territory).
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51 In San Giovanni, mafiosi are sometimes called *signori*, an indigenous term
52
53 with a vast array of meaning, including connotations of landed gentry. Mafiosi
54
55 were never members of the aristocracy, but many come from a rural bourgeoisie
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58
59 ³ My interlocutors navigate different situations that produce a grey zone, where knots of relations
60
61 pertaining to mafia, anti-mafia and state both conflict and merge (Author 2017b).
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4 (see Lupo 2011: 9). *Signore* resonates with *signoria*, a term for rural and more
5
6 generally territorial dominion (Santino 2015). Most San Giovanni mafiosi,
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8 however, including those mentioned in this essay were viticulturers, or came into
9
10 viticulture from animal husbandry.
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15 In an area where vineyards dominated both landscape and economy,
16
17 families like that of the infamous Giovanni Bareto were looked down upon before
18
19 their class ascendancy into and through mafia (during the 1950s and 1960s). Rural
20
21 domination implied that mafiosi who did not have roots in the agrarian middle
22
23 class should acquire plots in mass purchases of vineyard land to amass symbolic
24
25 capital. As either the inheritors of past landed estates or the owners of newly
26
27 bought large plots, the mafiosi had established themselves in an agrarian domain
28
29 fragmented by state confiscations.
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35 Both as locals and far-away businessmen, violence served as the major
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37 resource for mafiosi in establishing themselves as peasant entrepreneurs,
38
39 especially as middlemen of power. A configuration of power stems from the
40
41 bridging of state and locality that mafia patronage and brokerage establishes (Blok
42
43 1988). This configuration, which institutes the mafia as a power project
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45 incorporated into capitalism (Schneider and Schneider 2004), originates in
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47 violence or, most often, the threat of it. The mafia's primitive accumulation has
48
49 been constant, continuing to this day in Southern Italy (Saviano 2007, 17).
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55 Historically, this is a result of the land deprivation of most peasants, on an
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57 island where land reform has had poor effects (Schneider and Schneider 1996,
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59 250–54), as well as political intentions (Blok 1988: 79). Even in the latifundist
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4 period, a rising class had moved out of rent capitalism into becoming middlemen
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6 (Blok 1988: 67), setting the price of grapes (Bandiera 2003). Schneider and
7
8 Schneider, in the context of monocrop agriculture in Sicily, call this mafia activity
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10 ‘broker capitalism’ (1976, 160). As Watts has recently pointed out, both Blok and
11
12 the Schneiders
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16 ...were edging close to the idea of a ‘mafia capitalism’, quite unlike the
17
18 subsequent work of economists on the ‘market in protection’ [...] – that is,
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20 of construing mafia less as a state of exception than as a normalised system
21
22 of violent capitalist accumulation (Watts 2016, 76, n15).

23
24 In this endeavor, the mafia’s aggression operates as a ‘violence industry’, where
25
26 force is used ‘strategically’ and is carefully invested (Dickie 2004, 47–54).
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28
29 The neighborhood of bounded land plots explored here, in the area of San
30
31 Giovanni, should be placed in this historical and geographical context, which
32
33 draws on the lived memory of many antimafia participants. For instance, a series
34
35 of violent clashes with different aspects of a Sicilian peasant movement inspired
36
37 by progressive ideas has taken place decades before the antimafia agrarian
38
39 cooperatives were established. The movement was particularly vocal and
40
41 organized in at least two occasions: both during the *Fasci* mobilizations in the last
42
43 years of the 19th century⁴ and in the years post-Wold War II (explored in detail in
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50 ⁴ The *Fasci Siciliani dei Lavoratori* (Sicilian Workers Leagues) of the 1890s peasant
51
52 movement are a central moment in the existing historiography of peasant mobilisation in
53
54 Sicily. What is more, the *Fasci* was a reference point for my interlocutors’ own way to
55
56 historicize the antimafia movement’s past today as ‘the birth of the antimafia movement’
57
58 (see also Santino 2009: 16). The *Fasci* contributed to a seminal change in the way agrarian
59
60 labor relations are legislated in Sicily and Italy, as well as a reformulation of the island’s
61
62 relationship to the nation, one generation after Unification. The ‘Corleone agreements’,
63
64 the first trade union collective contract in Italy, an outcome of this mobilisation, confirm
65
66 the *Fasci*’s centrality in modern Italian history.

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4 Author 2014). The memories of that movement, as well as narratives of violence
5
6
7 against it, have been incorporated in the ways everyone in the contemporary
8
9 antimafia co-ops thinks of their own commitment to their land plots and the
10
11 general antimafia project. This includes, for instance, the negotiation of the
12
13 memory of agrarian proletarians in the mafia massacre of Portella della Ginestra in
14
15 1947, widely believed to be the first of many ambiguous violent eruptions and one
16
17 of many landed mafia-state coalitions⁵ (Author 2014, 22).
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20

21 The antimafia movement experienced a blow in Portella, but did not
22
23 recede. Examples of antimafia activity in the 1960s and '70s are often associated
24
25 with the Left and indeed the Far-Left, particularly in Sicily (as per the example of
26
27 Peppino Impastato, see Vitale 1995). The earliest legislation linked to antimafia
28
29 struggles to seize mafia land was passed in 1982⁶ (Law 646) and instigated the
30
31 sequestration of assets belonging to members of the mafia. As the mafia's power in
32
33 Sicily has been receding since the mid-1990s, following a series of mafia killings
34
35 that provoked popular contempt for mafia organizations (Jamieson 2000, 127), its
36
37 control over landed property is increasingly challenged by the Italian state. The
38
39 state confiscations of mafia land unsettled the symbolic and material presence of
40
41 land tenure for mafiosi. The extent of the antimafia coops' land tenure certainly
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51 ⁵ I am referring to the well known massacre of 13 innocent peasants from the area where I
52 did fieldwork on the 1st of May demonstration.
53

54
55 ⁶ The passing of the law ("Rognoni/La Torre" law) was itself partly an outcome of
56 struggles in the Sicilian Left against the mafia (Pio La Torre was a PCI MP who was killed
57 by Cosa Nostra). His collaboration with Rognoni also shows the convergence of the two
58 major parties, *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC) and *Partito Comunista Italiano* en route to an
59 antimafia political consensus slowly solidifying in the 1980s, to peak in the Second
60 Republic post-1994.
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4 does not correspond to the old latifundia and is in fact fragmented in many small
5
6 plots, often vineyards (allowing for contact with mafia plots across many cases).
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8 Most of the land in the area is actually owned by smallholders, mainly viticulturers
9
10 (a median of 7Ha of vineyard per household). The typical antimafia and mafia land
11
12 plots bordering each other would be vineyards averaging 4Ha. To understand the
13
14 dialectics of plot proximity between a state project and the processes permeating
15
16 its local articulation, we should consider the story of these confiscations.
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23 *The project of antimafia land confiscations*

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25
26 In 1996, the antimafia non-governmental organization Libera (the largest umbrella
27
28 NGO in Italy) collected more than one million signatures in support of a demand
29
30 that ‘the mafia restored what was unjustly usurped’ (Libera 2010, 1; see also
31
32 Frigerio and Pati 2006). Law 109 of 1996, which provided for the ‘social use of
33
34 assets confiscated by the mafia’, followed soon after. It dictated that once a
35
36 mafioso had been convicted, his assets, most often including property rights to
37
38 land, would be handed over to the Ministry for Internal Affairs. After identification
39
40 of the territorial jurisdiction where such assets were located, the Ministry would
41
42 pass them on to the relevant municipality.
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49 From 1999 onwards, in order to ensure that the confiscated land would be
50
51 put to ‘social use’, much of it was eventually transferred to local agrarian
52
53 antimafia cooperatives set up to cultivate wheat, vines, and legumes. A confiscated
54
55 winery in Spicco Vallata also allowed for the production of wine. These
56
57 cooperatives fall easily into conceptions of the social use of land because they
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4 adhere to constitutionally protected principles of Italian cooperativism and are
5
6 non-profit organizations (Italian Constitution, Article 45). Accordingly, they are
7
8 bolstered by the state alongside Libera. Assisting the marketing of products, Libera
9
10 garners civic sympathy for the wider project and provides legal aid and advocacy.
11
12 The NGO successfully promoted the cooperatives by explaining to the public that
13
14 the land was allocated to co-ops ‘as they represented the community’ (Libera 2010,
15
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19 3).

20
21 In Sicily, the Spicco Vallata valley, where this research⁷ was carried out,
22
23 experienced the majority of these antimafia initiatives. Spicco Vallata’s eight
24
25 municipalities retained legal ownership of land plots and transferred the
26
27 administration of their usufruct and adjunct rights to relevant cooperatives (Author
28
29 2014). From 1996 to the present day, the valley has been the foremost site in Italy
30
31 for land reforms based on antimafia confiscations and restitutions. There are
32
33 around ten such agrarian cooperatives operating on land confiscated from the
34
35 mafia by the state. They are spread across Italy in regions as diverse as Sicily
36
37 (operating in almost all provinces of the island), Campania, Puglia, Calabria, and
38
39 indeed Lazio, and work on more than 1500 hectares of land (approximately 3750
40
41 acres⁸), mainly vineyards, as well as legume and dry farming. The province of
42
43 Palermo alone, which includes the Spicco Vallata valley, hosts four of them. An ad
44
45 hoc state institution oversaw the organisation of these reforms. This institution,
46
47 titled ‘Spicco Consortium’, was presided over by Lucio Mandola, a fiery 45-year-
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57 ⁷ The fieldwork for this research lasted 18 months (the latter part of 2008 and throughout
58
59 2009).

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61 ⁸ Data from 2018.

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3
4 old lawyer from Palermo. Mandola was selected on the grounds of his track record
5
6 of antimafia convictions during his legal practice. Alongside him, three
7
8 functionaries worked in the Consortium's seat, which was located in Palermo until
9
10 2010, when it moved to the Spicco Vallata village of San Giovanni.
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13
14 The first land plot to be 'restored' – that is, allocated to a social cooperative
15
16 – was a vineyard belonging to Totò 'The Beast' Riina, which was deeded to a
17
18 cooperative named Lavoro e Altro. Three other co-ops, with names drawn from a
19
20 repertoire of antimafia heroes (i.e., Falcone in 2001, Borsellino and Libera in
21
22 2006), were created after public competitions organised by the Spicco Consortium
23
24 as part of its plan to re-allocate the land 'to the community'. The overall political
25
26 situation, informed by the antimafia-sympathetic urban civil society mobilisations
27
28 of the 1990s (Schneider and Schneider 2003; 2006), had created an apparent
29
30 consensus over the importance of antimafia struggle among many local actors.
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36 Mandola, along with other lawyers and legislators involved in the
37
38 confiscation and distribution laws, told me that the confiscation law, as well as the
39
40 general antimafia legislation, aimed to isolate the mafiosi, distancing them from
41
42 local people and 'excluding them from landholding, which was their symbolic
43
44 power'. The Consortium and Libera insisted upon the formation of an antimafia
45
46 community that never fully materialized in a consistent way. This was partly due
47
48 to the contacts that antimafia co-op members had established with mafiosi
49
50 neighbors. The interesting development here is that, instead of isolating mafia
51
52 proprietors, confiscations brought them in close proximity to people committed to
53
54 'doing antimafia'. As Enzo, a manual laborer and member of the Falcone co-op,
55
56 said, 'Plot boundaries are an issue made of people, not just borders... they are
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4 what people make of them’.

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6 To understand the complexities related to new land allocation and
7 administration and the neighborhood conditions thereof, it is worth considering the
8 nature of the confiscations law, which did not apply to all land. The agricultural
9 tracts considered may have had different histories of acquisition, but in local
10 contextual terms they fell into two broad categories. Certain land tracts came to a
11 mafia family as dowry or through the legitimate savings of the mafioso himself; in
12 local discourse, this is typically described as *familiare* (family) land. But other
13 tracts were acquired by a mafioso as a result of his illicit activities, such as
14 extortion or money laundering, and are defined as *propria* (own) land. It was only
15 the latter form of land that was subject to confiscation.
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31 Using drug or extortion racket money, mafiosi tended to buy all the tracts
32 surrounding their original familial land to raise their property holdings and social
33 clout. As the outer circles had been acquired through drug money, they were
34 confiscated. The antimafia cooperatives therefore ‘ringed in’ the mafia in the
35 propertied landscape, since mafiosi had their legitimately acquired “family” land
36 in the center of a series of concentric circles of property. This situation allowed for
37 constant interaction between antimafia cooperative members and mafiosi through
38 the contiguous land plots subject to each group’s control.
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51 The antimafia agrarian cooperatives were not uniform: although in theory
52 working ‘for the community’, they were internally stratified. Social divisions
53 within them reflect a history of social relations that predate the co-ops. A team of
54 manual workers from the villages of Spicco Vallata constituted the majority of the
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4 members; a team of graduate office workers from Palermo served as the managers.
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6 Most workers⁹ had long histories of agrarian labour on mafiosi's lands, as well as
7
8 memories of social relations with mafiosi. The managers, on the other hand, had
9
10 clerical and management jobs in the small offices that the three co-ops shared in
11
12 the village of San Giovanni – the 'antimafia headquarters', as they called it.
13
14 Almost all of them commuted every morning from Palermo and rarely, if ever,
15
16 visited the land plots. Managers and workers interacted in the uncomfortable
17
18 coexistence of family and confiscated land in the Sicilian landscape, as both were
19
20 exposed to proximity and thus degrees of familiarity with mafiosi. Their reactions
21
22 to these contacts with mafiosi were conditioned, to some extent, on each team's
23
24 social background. Worker-members generally had a more immediate
25
26 understanding of plots and mafiosi neighbors. Instead of focusing on these intra-
27
28 cooperative divisions, however, I show how other, more stark divisions (mafia vs
29
30 antimafia) can be nuanced through land plot neighbourhood, and it is indeed the
31
32 cooperative agrarian workers that experienced this condition of unintended contact
33
34 with "the mafia"¹⁰. Two vignettes from this experience can offer an entry point to
35
36 appreciate the plots' dynamics.
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51 ⁹ In an economy where landholding and wage-work were often mixed, the local worker-
52 members had cultivated small tracts of land (mainly vineyards) and worked for wages in
53 agrarian settings for generations.
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56 ¹⁰ I have focused on the inner class divisions of the cooperatives, as they reflect different
57 experience of the local territory and history elsewhere, exploring for instance different
58 associations of kinship (Author 2017a) or discursive techniques (Author 2019). Here,
59 these class differences provide a backdrop to my argument as well as a layer of
60 complexity to the ethnographic analysis, but are not my focal point.
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4 **The story of two land tracts**
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7 *'Familiare' land: the story of Antonia Bareto's plot*
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10 The Bareto family has been central to the history of Spicco Vallata, and indeed
11 Sicily itself, since the 1950s or earlier. Their patrilineal genealogy produced three
12 generations of leading figures of Cosa Nostra, Sicily's mafia. This patriline came
13 to an end with Giovanni Bareto, who was condemned to life imprisonment in 1999
14 for the murder of over 150 people and for the partial control of the mafia
15 organization's global heroin trafficking during the 1980s and early 1990s. The
16 Baretos owned plots of land near their now-abandoned home on the outskirts of
17 San Giovanni. Antonia Bareto, wife of mafioso and clan leader Bernardo, inherited
18 the vineyards on this land from her father (a non-mafioso). She then handed them
19 to her two sons: Giovanni and Vincenzo, both mafiosi, who were arrested in 1996
20 (Giovanni had already been convicted in absentia). The vineyards had not been
21 confiscated because their mother was not part of the mafia, and thus her assets did
22 not derive from 'mafia activity'. The land was therefore deemed to be *familiare*
23 (familial) property.
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44 Adamo and Nicola, both locals, recalled a time in the mid-1990s when they
45 worked together there on the harvest and agreed that the plots had, until recently,
46 been very productive. They told me of their experiences working the land and of
47 the relationship they had established with their employers. Although this
48 relationship was tenuous due to their employers' involvement in violent crime and
49 drug trafficking, Adamo and Nicola reminisced about that time with nostalgia,
50 noting how beautiful a vineyard it used to be and how well the family cared for it.
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4 Both men remarked what ‘a pity’ it was that, although not confiscated, this
5
6 vineyard now lay uncultivated.
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10 Antonia Bareto never involved herself in managing the vineyard, even after
11 Giovanni was imprisoned. Adamo explained that “the mother could not cultivate
12 this *familiare* plot, which she felt belonged to her son”. I enquired further as to
13
14 what the workers’ designation of this plot as ‘*familiare*’ meant. Palermitan lawyers
15
16 and the Spicco Consortium managers responsible for overseeing the confiscations
17
18 project explained to me that the term ‘familial’ implied belonging to the family
19
20 unit. The term referred to plots that had not been confiscated, since it had been
21
22 proven that the mafioso owner had acquired them through means other than the
23
24 ‘usurping’ entailed in ‘mafia accumulation activity’ (Frigerio and Pati 2006: 19
25
26 and 59). Inheritance and dowry were the main techniques by which mafiosi
27
28 acquired land tracts with *familiare* status. In the case discussed above, Antonia
29
30 Bareto had bequeathed the legal title to a male child (a mafioso).
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39 Adamo and Nicola are linked to this story of land ownership through two
40 kinds of relations: antimafia co-op membership, on the one hand, and a history of
41 labour relations with the Baretos, on the other. As the new overseers of a
42
43 neighbouring plot which shared a boundary with the Bareto plots, and as antimafia
44
45 co-op members, they found themselves in a surprisingly twofold condition, linked
46
47 both to the cooperative (as co-op members) and to the Baretos (as ex-workers).
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54 The co-existence of mafia *familiare* land alongside their confiscated plots, I
55
56 soon found out, yielded surprising continuities in local practices. I shall consider
57
58 further how familiarity and neighborhood belong to continuing histories of social
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4 relations through the story of the plots of Mimmo Torinese, another local mafioso.
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10 ***‘Propria’ land: at the boundary, with Torinese***
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12 When convicted, a mafioso has to prove that the origin of his land assets is licit in
13 order to retain them. If he cannot support his claim that he acquired a piece of land
14 lawfully, the property is presumed to be the outcome of his mafia activity and is
15 thus associated with his mafia membership. In contrast to the category *familiare*,
16 this is locally called *proprietà propria* (‘own property’). Land that falls into this
17 category is confiscated because, in the absence of proof to the contrary, it is legally
18 registered as acquired through illicit means.
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30 Mimmo Torinese was a renowned farmer. Like many of the village mafiosi,
31 he had invested racket money in buying land that was adjacent to his original
32 familial land in a conscious strategy to expand. Some of his plots had since been
33 confiscated and were now managed by the Falcone cooperative, while others still
34 remained in his family’s possession due to their *familiare* status. Some cooperative
35 members had vivid memories of working for the Torinese family. Many of these
36 Torinese plots bordered on plots confiscated from the Torineses and were now
37 managed by the antimafia cooperatives.
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50 Torinese owned a vineyard in the territory of Reale (a Spicco Vallata
51 village) that was used as a front to launder drug money in the mid-1980s. After the
52 downfall of the Baretos, the mafioso was the San Giovanni mafia leader from 1996
53 until his conviction in absentia in 1999, when the land plot was confiscated and
54 became property of the state. The Reale municipality then transferred its usufruct
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4 rights to the Falcone antimafia cooperative under a renewable free lease contract.
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6 Additionally, a related winery building located amongst these vineyards was
7
8 finally confiscated from Mimmo Torinese in 2007. In March 2010, it became
9
10 Passi, the cooperative's winery, bottling under the Falcone label.
11
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14 Alongside the confiscated land and winery was a Torinese *familiare* tract
15
16 that had not been confiscated. Early one April morning, Enzo and Piero, two local
17
18 worker-members from the Falcone co-op, were working in this part of the Falcone
19
20 vineyard just a few yards away from the Torinese *familiare* plot. Suddenly, Enzo's
21
22 cellphone rang. It turned out to be Mimmo Torinese's 40-year-old son Ciccio, just
23
24 out of prison, complaining in strong Sicilian dialect and demanding to meet with
25
26 someone from the Falcone co-op to discuss a problem with plot boundaries.
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31 The incident caused distress amongst the Falcone managers. The 35-year-
32
33 old president, Luca, and the vice-president, Mina, were particularly upset. They
34
35 were opposed to a meeting with land plot neighbors whom they considered 'unable
36
37 to reason with'. They insisted that the cooperative call in the police; even if there
38
39 were to be a meeting to discuss property boundaries, they wanted the *Carabinieri*
40
41 (the Italian military police) to be present. 'Our boundaries are not to be negotiated
42
43 at a mafioso's phone call. These lands are not *just* plots; the state is invested in
44
45 them', Luca asserted to me. However, after they saw that the workers were
46
47 adamant that there should be a meeting with the mafioso neighbor on this issue,
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49 Luca and Mina acquiesced. The workers argued that they could understand the
50
51 situation better than 'those in the office', as they experienced working alongside
52
53 the cooperatives' neighbors (*vicini*).
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4 The meeting was arranged for the next morning at 6 a.m. It took place at
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6
7 the exact boundary line between the Torinesees' family land and their confiscated
8
9 plot. The facial features of the mafioso were barely visible in the dim light,
10
11 causing some distress to the co-op members. However, the meeting went well.
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13 When I asked him about it later that day, Enzo reported, 'He [Torinese] was well-
14
15 mannered. He was a gentleman, like these people [mafiosi] often are'.
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19 The constitution of neighborhood here is formed through recognizing
20
21 difference, but also accepting contact between proximate realities – as workers and
22
23 mafiosi are part of the same rural locality, sharing life conditions. This locality is
24
25 immensely stratified, and one should acknowledge in the semiotics of Enzo's
26
27 words themselves how this is so: the word *signore* [gentleman] that he used has
28
29 strong connotations of landed gentry in Sicily. Torinese was indeed a *signore* of
30
31 this sort.
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35 Nicola juxtaposed his remembrance of the 'past continuous unity of these
36
37 plots' with the current experience of working a now-fragmented domain of
38
39 confiscated and *familiare* plots. In these tracts, the historical connections of land
40
41 had been reconfigured, nevertheless leaving behind ongoing, lively neighborhood
42
43 relations between mafia and antimafia. For those cooperative members who, like
44
45 Nicola, remembered working on the same plots for the old mafiosi owners, this
46
47 sense of a 'lost past' was intensified. The remembrance of the land plots' unity in
48
49 the pre-confiscation period reinforced a belief that the confiscated plots'
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51 boundaries were less rigid in practice than in legal discourse.
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58 However, this past is not idealized, and co-op members are attentive to the
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4 land boundary as a divider between their present and a past where mafia could be
5
6 more ostensibly violent than now. This temporal division does not mean mafia is
7
8 annihilated, but rather that its contemporaneous existence alongside the antimafia
9
10 is recognized in land property categories. Enzo and Piero realized that Ciccio
11
12 Torinese *did* have a rightful claim over the disputed land between the two
13
14 properties. Ciccio proved this to them by providing the relevant legal documents
15
16 during the meeting. Surprised, the co-op members checked them and admitted that
17
18 the mafioso was legally right; they had, albeit accidentally, extended their plot's
19
20 boundaries, thereby trespassing on their neighbor's *familiare* property. Both Ciccio
21
22 Torinese's polite ways, and the fact that the co-op members had past or ongoing
23
24 work relations in his plots, carried a common understanding on the sharing of the
25
26 land boundary. Mafia and antimafia actors at once acknowledge the boundary as a
27
28 separator between their different realities and engaged in contact over it. Their
29
30 shared understanding of the boundary has even legal reductions, and is a matter of
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32 initial conflict and eventual agreement.
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44 **Uncomfortable proximity: moral borders and lines of contact**

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47 This idea about the land boundary was conditioned, in the case of Torinese, by the
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49 contiguity of co-ops' plots with the mafioso's, as well as by the contact with
50
51 Ciccio Torinese himself. It is through such contacts that people of the
52
53 cooperatives' manual workforce team actually experienced the boundaries of the
54
55 confiscated plots as lines of contact. To recall Enzo's statement, land plot
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57 proximity was an 'issue made of people, not just borders'.
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4 In some cases, management members thought that it was impossible to
5
6 establish any genuine contact with mafiosi neighbors. Furthermore, they thought
7
8 that the boundaries between the *familiare* and the confiscated plots needed to be
9
10 defended. Like the borders of a state, these boundaries represented a clear division
11
12 (between mafia and antimafia), which would be threatened by paths of social
13
14 contact connecting the un-confiscated and confiscated land. For most members of
15
16 the co-op management, the mafiosi belonged, as the Falcone co-op's vice-
17
18 president Mina told me, to a 'different universe', and were not suitable for moral
19
20 judgment. In defending physical land boundaries and invoking the authority of
21
22 law, Mina communicated her belief in this utter difference, protecting what she
23
24 saw as the moral world of the cooperatives. For this reason, the general belief was
25
26 that court action was the most appropriate solution to all problems regarding
27
28 disputes with the mafia. Demonstrating a firm, normative antimafia morality was,
29
30 after all, part and parcel of the ideology of co-op administrators, an issue that often
31
32 raised ambiguity within the co-ops (see Author 2018, 173).
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41 Some Falcone managers spelled out this radical difference with neighbors
42
43 in a language of war. They stated that dealing with plot boundaries meant
44
45 'defending borders'. Learning to navigate these borders was a main skill that co-op
46
47 administrators learnt on the job, interacting with mafiosi in San Giovanni
48
49 (although never in Palermo) (see Author 2019: 91-93). Sometimes, they explicitly
50
51 asserted that 'the Italian state was represented' by, and within, the confines of their
52
53 plots, thereby marking *familiare* land not just as non-state, but as threatening, anti-
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55 state land. As Silvio, the president of Falcone, put it in an interview, there was 'a
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4 lot to defend in our boundaries; not just land, but whatever both we and the state
5
6 stand for in Sicily'. When I asked why the Italian flag was waving at the
7
8 inauguration of the Passi winery on confiscated grounds, an impassioned manager
9
10 told me, 'Because we are Italians. And they [mafiosi] are not'.
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14 Although they did not vilify the mafiosi and did see them as co-villagers,
15
16 manual workers also saw the co-ops' plots as markers of difference. Like the co-op
17
18 managers, workers sometimes relied on a warlike rhetoric to describe their
19
20 proximity to mafia, using phrases like 'peaceful coexistence' and 'diplomacy'. In
21
22 fact, co-op worker-members felt they knew what 'life at the border' was better
23
24 than the managers. Enzo himself had told me that 'the kids in the office do not
25
26 know how it is to face the mafiosi every day, there, at the front of the battle [*al*
27
28 *fronte*]'.

29 The above phrases constitute a range of metaphors which imply that the
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31 process of cultivating the confiscated land right by the mafioso neighbor was akin
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33 to experiencing the frontline of a conflict. At the same time, however, manual
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35 workers felt some degree of familiarity with mafiosi and insisted that the
36
37 administration's ideas about the people at the other side of the 'front' as strangers
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39 were out of kilter. As Adamo told me, 'We, people of the area's villages, have been
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41 brought up close to our current neighbors, next door to them'.
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51 When I asked the Carabinieri marshal from San Giovanni about the
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53 Torinese event during one of our encounters, he underlined the idea of *convivere* to
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55 me: 'The co-ops and mafia need to learn to live together' (*bisogna imparare il*
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57 *convivere*). He argued that the current good neighborhood conditions between co-
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4 op workers and mafiosi were an indication of how innocuous the antimafia was:
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6 ‘The cooperatives don’t mean anything bad for the mafiosi; they don’t bother
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8 them. The simple fact that they are working right next to Torinese, and he offers
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10 them water, for instance, means that the mafiosi are just not bothered and see the
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12 antimafia simply as neighbors’.

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17 Managers thought of plot boundaries as borders for their moral universes,
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19 while workers did not believe that their plots secured a universe and thus did not
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21 discount the possibility of contact with mafiosi. Indeed, to a certain degree, they
22
23 recognized mafiosi as valid and, most centrally, as people who belonged to the
24
25 same universe as they did. As a result, the Consortium’s attempts to establish, via
26
27 the confiscations, a local separation of mafiosi from antimafia people – a
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29 ‘*spaccatura*’ (split), as Leoluca Orlando, the antimafia mayor of Palermo, once
30
31 said – was incomplete.
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37 Rather than arguing in favor of smooth proximities, mafia-antimafia
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39 relations should be contextualized in a long history of violence, which provides the
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41 backdrop to the current truce (but not reconciliation) between mafia and antimafia
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43 over their shared boundaries¹¹. Following the marshal’s point would trivialize the
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45 ‘living together’ situation of conviviality. Attention is needed, instead, to the wider
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47 history of a tense spatial proximity of non-mafia-affiliated people with mafia,
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49 especially in the case of the antimafia agrarian co-ops’ members.
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59 ¹¹ At the same time, they should also be contextualized in local networks where kinship
60 offers a major lens of local understanding (an issue tackled at length in Author 2017a, as
61 well as in some ethnographic detail in Author 2019: 95)
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4 In one occasion, Adamo and Enzo underlined to me that the co-op plots
5
6 they were working on at that moment were once ‘covered in blood’. That tract of
7
8 land was where trade unionist Placido Rizzotto gave a passionate speech to the
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10 gathered peasants before they occupied the estate, facing with mafia’s *gabelloti*
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12 violence. The mafia assassinated Rizzotto in 1948 (Paternostro 1994). Not far
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14 from that plot, the police in 1994 discovered the body of a small boy who was
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16 strangled by a local mafioso.
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25 **Conclusion: Neighborhood and shared boundaries**

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28 To know one’s land means also to know the landscape with its multiple temporal
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30 identity layers, akin to a palimpsest. This essay has explored what takes place on
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32 and around the boundary border - that symbolic, yet normative, line - separating
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34 and uniting bounded fields in a shared social landscape.
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38 People of clearly divergent social categories often occupy the same village
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40 spaces, evoking social memory of a violent past (e.g. Sorge 2015a). However, the
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42 kinship histories built into land inheritance (the matrilineal *familiare* land, in
43
44 particular), can inform surprising proximities between mafia and antimafia. The
45
46 Sicilian lens employed to scrutinize the impositions of boundaries allows us to
47
48 reconsider the relationship between seemingly bounded entities: two micro-
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50 communities may live in relative peace together in the locality, while poised
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52 sharply against each other on the national sphere.
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58 The mafia and antimafia find themselves in an extreme situation in which
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4 they are the most radically opposed social groups of a peasant community and also
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6 those most closely sharing geographical proximity. This paradox allows us to
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8 appreciate bounded entities as micro-communities that spill onto each other and
9
10 become defined by their opposites. Antimafia actors are aware of their neighbor as
11
12 a potential culprit of violence, and some of this enmity is not just imagined; the
13
14 antimafia people, with whom I have spent most time in the field, would often
15
16 identify mafiosi neighbors as (erstwhile or potential) villains. The materiality of
17
18 this neighborhood enmity is rooted in recent acts of violence, but also in sharp
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20 changes (especially in the landed property regime) that followed such acts.
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27 It is this internal differentiation (boundaries within the community itself)
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29 that some Italianist anthropologists have noted elsewhere (Mahmud 2015; Sorge
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31 2015b). It is a division underpinned by a boundary, but not confined in the
32
33 bounded entity of the land plot. Outside the bounded entity of the plot and its
34
35 symbolic weight (“antimafia”), sociality continues unhindered as feuding groups
36
37 come to unexpected close proximity. The village is a space and a temporal
38
39 community where both sides of the spectrum (mafia/antimafia) have much to
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41 share, despite differences, as (proximate) opposites intersecting each other (Blok
42
43 1997: 49) – and where those representing national narratives (antimafia
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45 administrators) are sometimes bounded out.
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52 Both the space and time of setting boundaries are inscribed in the historical
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54 landscape that people evoke through shared memories (like the ones Adamo and
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56 Nicola had about the Barbetos). The violence evoked in some Italian landscapes
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58 suggests a counter-narrative to that of specific national history: “the past sits in
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4 places”, and some of these places can be uncomfortable to bystanders or even to
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7 people of the community (Sorge 2015b). It was certainly uncomfortable to
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10 antimafia co-op administrators like Mina, for instance, who reasoned (with the
11
12 state) that mafiosi were aliens to the area, bounded out of “new Sicily’s moral
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14 universe” (Mina’s words).

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17 The reaffirmation of bounded identity is thus a matter of internal
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20 contestation in such communities, which are by no way monolithic or
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23 homogenous. Such reaffirmations produce narratives of the temporal positionality
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26 of our subjects’ place-in-the-world. The empirical reality of people like Adamo,
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28
29 Nicola and Enzo, is often positioned slightly outside the state’s history, a temporal
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32 area that seems to impose one specific reading of the landscape over people’s
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35 past(s) (Sorge 2015a: 157; cf Stacul 2005: 819).

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38 The enmity of these interlocutors with mafiosi is informed and largely
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41 constructed by (mainly national) inimical categories of subjects who share some
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44 elements of social life in the village. Mafiosi and antimafiosi share some sociality
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47 in the rural area outside the village, because they happen to share land plot
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50 boundaries. The categorical contradiction mafia/antimafia, existing on the national
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53 level, is sometimes resolved on the local, due to the liminal life on the boundary.
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56 What the above Sicilian stories show us therefore is that the shared memory of a
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59 violent history is recast in sharing boundary plots as markers of separation, but
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62 also as points of contact. Antimafia confiscations brought together antithetical
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65 social actors, neighbors that share more similarities than conventionally

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4 understood. A project designed to eradicate the bases of mafia power resulted in
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6 much convivial conditions (*convivere*) with the mafia.
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10 This unintended mafia/antimafia closeness of ‘living together’ calls for
11
12 revisiting certain ideas of difference in proximity. It allows us to appreciate how
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14 state projects of land change, such as the antimafia, operate on the assumption of a
15
16 moral unity of cause, which they aspire to realize on grounds they cannot always
17
18 count on or control. This way, boundaries between land plots of enemies can turn
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20 into sites of encounter. The tensions and contradictions that emerge out of
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22 neighborhood socialities allow us to assess difference where people’s emplaced
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24 experiences are shaped by their shared boundaries.
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