

'Ndrangheta Narco's in the Netherlands: A critical look at an Italian frame of Italian criminals on Dutch soil



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Summertime,

And the livin' is easy

- Ella Fitzgerald & Louis Armstrong

- Voor Papa

Abstract

The Netherlands has become one of the largest cocaine markets in Europe. With Antwerp and Rotterdam being the largest entry points of cocaine in Europe and organized crime in the Netherlands and Belgium becoming main stay in public media. This market is not only used by local organized crime groups but has also attracted foreign groups to the Netherlands. One of these is the 'Ndrangheta, the Calabrian mafia that has become the supposed most dominant player in the European cocaine market. From the shadows of the Cosa Nostra, the 'Ndrangheta stepped into the light as the most internationally active Italian mafia. However, what role does this 'Ndrangheta play in the biggest cocaine importing market in Europe and how did that role come to be?

In this thesis I will analyze the 'Ndrangheta as an organization that was founded during the Italian Unification in the 1860's and how they have evolved into an internationally active archipelagos of clans that is active in transnational cocaine trafficking. Combining a critical view on mafias, theories of mafia mobility and seeing the role of the 'Ndrangheta in the middle-market I will analyze the way that the 'Ndrangheta is involved in the Dutch cocaine market. I have used an extensive literature analysis and semi-structured interviews with experts to analyze holistically and historically how this came to be.

After what I perceive the role of the 'Ndrangheta to be, I will analyze the way that discourse has evolved by the power of what I perceive to be moral entrepreneurs in the discussion surrounding the 'Ndrangheta. The manner of influence that Italian law enforcement has on the way that the 'Ndrangheta and their role in the European cocaine market is perceived. For this I have done a discourse analysis.

Keywords: 'Ndrangheta, cocaine markets, middle-market distribution, mafia mobility, moral entrepreneurs

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Chapter 1. Introduction

"I'm gonna make him an offer he can't refuse."

(Coppola, 1972)

These words by fictional mafia boss Vito Corleone are cemented in the pantheon of Hollywood as one of the most recognizable quotes ever uttered on the big screen. As Letizia Paoli writes:

"At least since Joe Valachi's televised hearings before the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the US Senate in 1963, the Italian American Cosa Nostra has been prominent in public imagination, seen as the embodiment of organized crime. This view was popularized by the release of the first Godfather film in 1972 and has been reinforced by the lasting success of the Godfather trilogy and production of more than 450 films featuring Italian American mafiosi since 1972 (Santopietro, 2012; Italic Institute of America, 2015). Southern Italian mafia organizations, particularly the Sicilian Cosa Nostra, took on this mythic status (Paoli, 2020, pp. 1–2)."

The mafia has transcended crime as a concept. Because of this, Italy is infamously known as the country that sprouted the mafia. The Italian mafia as an organization is one of many faces within the public sphere. Popular media has made the Italian mafia into the most romanticized version of what organized crime can be with movies like *The Godfather*, *Goodfellas* and *The Irishman*. The mafia has become public heritage and names like Michael Corleone, Lucky Luciano and Al Capone have been embedded within popular culture (Calderoni *et al.*, 2016a; Camilleri, 2008). Italy has become the country synonymous with organized crime, even though the most famous names that are embedded in international public culture are connected to the Sicilian Cosa Nostra's offshoot in the United States. This can be seen by looking at the way the Italian mafia is described in Dutch media, with an air of romanticism and mysticism:

"The Italian mafia. It seems like something from the distant past. Something that appears in thrilling films or thrillers. Something over which a veil of mystery and criminality hangs. But it is a bitter and harsh reality, as the major international action against Ndrangheta proves once again (NWS, 2018)."

The American Cosa Nostra has put the mafia on the map and the region that it originated from (Dickie, 2011; Forgione, 2009). Sicily is known in the whole world as the home of the mafia (Paoli, 2004, 2014; Sauviller & Di Rosa, 2016). However, there are more mafias in Italy. This is exemplified by the case of the most famous journalist from Italy: Roberto Saviano. His investigative work on the Neapolitan Camorra with the book *Gomorra* has resulted in a life of 24/7 security and protection (*Eenvandaag*, 2021; Saviano, 2011). In this book, he illustrated how the Neapolitan Camorra, or like the Neapolitans call it, *The System*, has an iron grip on the Italian city and for example the drug markets in the region.

The visual adaptation of this book in the form of movies and a five seasons series showed in a realistically gruesome way the violence that occurs in Naples. The romanticism that can be ascribed to the Cosa Nostra in public media and the dystopian reality that gets ascribed to the Camorra are two sides of a coin when it comes to Italian organized crime. However, this two-sided coin is not the ultimate encapsulation of the Italian mafia. Another organized crime group from the *Mezzogiorno* is less represented in public media, less researched but more dominant on an international level: the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta (De Boer, 2020; *Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie*, 2017; Sauviller & Di Rosa, 2016).

The representation of Cosa Nostra and the Camorra in the media has exported and sometimes distorted the image and knowledge on the Italian mafia in popular culture. This is different with the 'Ndrangheta. If there is one thing that defines the public knowledge of the 'Ndrangheta it is the lack of knowledge. The 'Ndrangheta has been a relatively unknown organization for most of its existence as it has almost always existed in the shadow of the Sicilian Cosa Nostra (Dickie, 2011; Forgione, 2009; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009). This relatively unknown status has been one of the major deciding factors in the success that the 'Ndrangheta has had in the last 30 years. As with the issue of public knowledge and embeddedness in public media, the Cosa Nostra has been the mafia organization in Italy that garnered the most attention from Italian law enforcement. This exploded in the 1980s when the *Corleonesi*, a dominant faction within the Cosa Nostra, led by Salvatore 'Toto' Riina won the bloody mafia war and gained dominance in the Sicilian Cosa Nostra. The *Corleonesi* instigated a time of terrorism that lasted until the early 1990s when magistrates Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino began their campaign against the Cosa Nostra (Dickie, 2013; Paoli, 1998, 2014). Their Maxi Trials and deaths in two bombings at the hands of Toto Riina started the end of the dominance of Cosa Nostra. In the early 1990s, the Italian state led a massive crackdown on the Cosa Nostra and their end was deemed nigh. The Cosa Nostra changed its *modus operandi* and lost its grip on regions outside of Sicily (Camilleri, 2008; Dickie, 2011, 2013). With that, the problem of the mafia was deemed to be resolved, with a few exceptions for example in Naples. In this climate, the 'Ndrangheta could grow (Dalla Chiesa, 2021).

1.1 The 'Ndrangheta emerges

The feeling that the international role of the Italian mafia had been exterminated was smashed on the 15th August of 2007. On that day six men were murdered outside of an Italian restaurant in Duisburg in West Germany. The assassination was soon ascribed to Calabrian organized crime as the men murdered were part of the 'Ndrangheta (*De Telegraaf*, 2007; *Trouw*, 2007). The shooting proved that the 'Ndrangheta had migrated to Germany and that internal conflicts could be fought on territories outside Calabria (Winfield, 2011). In the years following the 'Ndrangheta placed itself more and more

in the limelight and Italian magistrates like investigate judge Nicola Gratteri stood at the forefront of getting European attention to the 'Ndrangheta. Reports started to pop up that the 'Ndrangheta had become the mafia that controlled the cocaine market in Europe (Calderoni, 2012; LA Times, 2007). The problem with the 'Ndrangheta however, was the fact that it seemed to be much more difficult to grasp for the media and the public. The 'Ndrangheta was being compared to the Cosa Nostra as this was the organization the most widely known. However, this comparison was insufficient and therefore more abstract terms were used to categorize the 'Ndrangheta as a criminal holding, Italy's biggest multinational and a mix of McDonald's and Al-Qaeda (*De Correspondent*, 2017; *De Stentor/Gelders Dagblad*, 2008; Eurispes, 2012; *Het Parool*, 2007). The 'Ndrangheta did not resonate as much as the widely known Cosa Nostra but had presented itself as the new mafia that was to be feared and fought.

This 'new mafia on the block' was said to have a monopoly on the European cocaine market and during the 2010s the Netherlands became more and more entrenched as one of the main entry points for cocaine in Europe. The growth of the port of Rotterdam and the growth of cocaine seizures in the 2010s in the Netherlands were indicators that the Netherlands was becoming more and more important in the European cocaine market (Staring *et al.*, 2019). Not only the cocaine seizures surged, but the level of publicly discussed violence in the Netherlands also grew. A head was found in front of a shisha bar, murders surrounding a crown witness and the threatening of the crown princess and the prime minister have all made the discourse surrounding organized cocaine criminality become forefront in the Netherlands (AD, 2021; Tromp & Tops, 2020; Werdmölder, 2021, 2022). The Netherlands has been compared to a Narcostate and the cocaine roundabout of Europe by multiple media outlets in the last few years (NRC, 2018a; *Telegraaf*, 2019; Werdmölder, 2022). New buzzwords like *ondermijning* (subversive crime) and the notion that the War on Drugs in the Netherlands is being lost have become part of public discourse (Eski, 2021; Leistra, 2020). All these factors would seem to make the Netherlands one of the best countries in Europe for the cocaine lords of Europe, the 'Ndrangheta.

1.2 Academic Relevance

There have been members of the 'Ndrangheta arrested in the Netherlands. There have been reports on the presence of the 'Ndrangheta in the Netherlands (*KLPD*, 2011; *Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie*, 2017). However, these reports made by Dutch law enforcement are several years old and primarily made for law enforcement purposes. There is still much unknown about the 'Ndrangheta and the role they play in the European cocaine market, specifically in the Netherlands (Calderoni, 2012; *Het Parool*, 2007). The 'Ndrangheta is an organization that is hard to grasp, with a name even harder to pronounce, which operates in the wholesale distribution of cocaine. The wholesale distribution section of the cocaine market, defined as the middle-market section, is also the least researched

section of the market. European law enforcement focuses on the import and retail stage. In these stages/sections of the market, the biggest victories are to be claimed and the most direct effect on the public can be observed. The role of 'Ndrangheta in this section of the market makes the organization even more ungraspable. With this thesis, I will try to advance the criminological knowledge of how international drug trafficking organized crime groups operate in the middle-market section. Besides this, I will try to shed a light on an underexposed mafia and see how a more complete understanding of the 'Ndrangheta may yield better results.

In conjunction with a more complete understanding of the 'Ndrangheta, I will look to the field of mafia mobility. This field has been growing in criminology but seems to be focused more on the theoretical side of the discipline (Allum, 2014; Calderoni *et al.*, 2016; Morselli *et al.*, 2011; Varese, 2011; 2020). Using the case of mafia mobility to see how this organization from Calabria has been able to migrate globally and use its international network to traffic cocaine can help in the overall understanding of how multiple forms of mafia migration can operate together. Seeing the interwovenness of multiple forms of mafia migration within the same organization can illustrate a more broadly usable concept of mafia mobility. The 'Ndrangheta is deemed to be active in every continent on earth (Business Insider, 2012; Forgione, 2009). This statement seems to be quite abstract and is easily misused. That is why deeper research on how this takes form within the 'Ndrangheta and the global cocaine market can help to bring a deeper understanding of these statements.

By combining research on the 'Ndrangheta, mafia mobility and illegal markets with expert interviews I will paint a picture of Italy's most dominant mafia and their role in the Dutch cocaine market.

1.3 Social relevance

The concept of mafia has been misused plenty of times and organizations that do not qualify for the title of mafia have been named as such because of misunderstanding of the mafia concept. The most striking Dutch example is the *Mocromaffia*, an entrepreneurially minded drug trafficking and network-based organized crime group (EMCDDA, 2022; Kenney, 2007; Laumans & Schrijver, 2014). When making comparisons between these local groups and the Italian mafias, a better understanding of the Italian mafias is warranted.

A better understanding of the 'Ndrangheta as an organized crime group is in and of itself socially relevant. As described in the first paragraphs, public knowledge of the Cosa Nostra and to a lesser extent the Camorra is at a much farther stage than public knowledge of the 'Ndrangheta. There are Dutch and Flemish writers that have done remarkable work like Sanne de Boer (*Mafiopoli*), Koen Voskuil and Stan de Jong (*Maffiaparadijs*) and Raf Sauvillier and Salvatore di Rosa (*Maffia*). However, public understanding of the 'Ndrangheta is in its infancy. With academic research on the 'Ndrangheta

and their role in the Dutch cocaine market, a concept that the Dutch public steadily has gotten a better grasp on, a bridge can be built in the understanding of this organization. This is how Roberto Saviano discussed the stance that the Netherlands has when it comes to the mafia and the way the Dutch system has made the Netherlands a perfect place for organized crime:

“Because no journalist has ever been murdered by the Mafia in the Netherlands, because no judge has ever been murdered by the Mafia. Because no real social problems have ever arisen in the Netherlands because of the Mafia. Moreover, you keep claiming that this kind of outburst of violence is the fault of Moroccans, Russians or Italians who happen to be active in the Netherlands. But that's not how it works”
(*De Volkskrant*, 2019).

The most impactful way that organized crime affects the public is not with violence, he argues. This is in contrast with the focus on high-impact criminality like the aforementioned violence, which seems to be the main reason for action against organized crime. When looking at the most impactful cases against organized crime in the Netherlands, like Ridouan Taghi and Piet Costa, the focus is almost always on the violence and the trafficking of cocaine is the underlying reason for that violence. In the Netherlands nowadays there is more and more focus on what is called *ondermijning*, defined by the Dutch government as the blurring of norms and a diminishing sense of safety and livability (*Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid*, 2018). While this is a very abstract definition, the goal is a more focused effort of law enforcement on the more subtle effects that organized crime has on society. When looking at the process of *ondermijning*, research into the ‘Ndrangheta may be a good reference point. This does not mean that I will use the term *ondermijning* in my thesis, as I do not feel that it is warranted or helpful whatsoever in an academic-minded work. However, the way that the ‘Ndrangheta uses the financial and logistical system in the Netherlands for the trafficking of cocaine has social relevance merely for the fact that it focuses on facets different than violence and direct social impact because of that.

1.4 Research Questions

In this thesis, I will organize the chapters based on sub-questions and the answers to these sub-questions will be used to answer the main research question of this thesis. To achieve a holistic understanding of the many aspects of this research and how they interrelate, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ 1: “What is the nature of ‘Ndrangheta involvement in the Dutch cocaine market?”

RQ 2: “What is the effect of the discursive power of Italian law enforcement and investigative journalism on the perception of the ‘Ndrangheta in the global cocaine market?”

In the pursuit of answering the first research question I used multiple sub-questions, which will be answered in the respective chapters dedicated to these questions:

RQ 1: Sub-question 1: *“What is the ‘Ndrangheta and how did it historically evolve?”*

RQ 1: Sub-question 2: *“How did ‘Ndrangheta evolve into an international organization that has links in multiple parts of the world?”*

RQ 1: Sub-question 3: *“What is the modus operandi and role of the ‘Ndrangheta in the European cocaine market and how has this changed between the 1980s and the early 2000s?”*

RQ 1: Sub-question 4: *“What is the nature of ‘Ndrangheta migration and involvement in the Dutch cocaine market since 2006?”*

The second research question will be answered by doing a discourse analysis in all four of my empirical chapters. I will do that by answering two sub-questions:

RQ 2: Sub-question 1: *“How do Italian law enforcement agencies frame the ‘Ndrangheta as an international organized crime group active in the European cocaine market?”*

RQ 2: Sub-question 2: *“How do Italian researchers and investigative journalists frame the ‘Ndrangheta as an international organized crime group active in the European cocaine market?”*

In the answering of this question I will analyze the same phenomenon, but I will do that coming from a different epistemology. This way I will not only analyze the phenomenon/subject itself but also the reaction of public media and law enforcement to the phenomenon. To answer these questions I will use a combination of pure qualitative methodologies like literature analysis of academic research and reports by law enforcement and investigative and public media. I will combine this with several expert interviews to answer my first research question. After answering my first research question I will use a discourse analysis of these reports, public media, and my expert interviews to answer my second research question. The expert interviews will thus first be used in the thesis to explain processes and actors for answering the first research question, but in the second stage of my thesis, I will use the opinions of these experts to analyze the effects of discourse on securitization and the effort of securitization as a whole.

1.5 Synopsis

This thesis is divided into 8 chapters. After the introduction, there will be a theoretical framework to base the thesis in academic theory. Incorporating theoretical views on what a mafia is, mafia mobility, and the cocaine market. In the third chapter, the methodological efforts will be reflected on. This will

be followed by three chapters focused on the 'Ndrangheta and their evolution from rural mafia to global cocaine trafficking organized crime group, corresponding with the respective sub-questions. Chapter 7 will discuss the role the 'Ndrangheta has in the Dutch cocaine market to conclude my answering to the first research question. In all empirical chapters, chapter 4 until chapter 7, the second research question will be answered throughout and thus will not be answered in a sole chapter corresponding to the specific question.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

"If my answers frighten you, then you should cease asking scary questions."

(Tarantino, 1994)

This chapter will outline my theoretical framework from multiple angles. When looking at scholarly works on mafia type organizations, there are multiple debates which I will discuss and try to use to determine the route that this thesis will take when looking at the role of 'Ndrangheta in the cocaine market in the Netherlands. As my thesis topic is in a way dual, I will divide these parts in this chapter, namely: 'Ndrangheta as an organization and the cocaine market in the Netherlands. After I talk about both parts, I will conclude by summarizing the theoretical framework I will use and subsequently put both parts together again. First I will look at 'Ndrangheta and how this organization can be typified, looking at the debates in criminology so to give an example of where my interpretation comes from.

2.1 What is Organized Crime

The term organized crime is a heavily debated subject. To start off with an example of how heavily debated it is, the mere use of capitals when writing the word is debated on its own. *Organized Crime* means something entirely different than *organized crime* in the minds of certain scholars, namely Hagan (Paoli & Vander Beken, 2014). In the search for what the leading definition of organized crime and following from that, the definition of mafia or 'Ndrangheta for this thesis will be, we will start by looking chronologically at what organized crime has meant. This is important because the chosen definition of organized crime is leading in the definition of a mafia, which will be at the center of this thesis. There have been huge differences in conceptions and goals for definitions of the term organized crime in the history of law enforcement, criminology and policy making. These discussions lay at the heart of the discussion on what can be typified as 'Mafia' (Kleemans, 2014; Paoli, 2020). The heart of the debate on organized crime starts with the focus on what the most important attribute of organized crime is, which was divided by Dwight C. Smith (1991): What? or Who? Hagan continued in Smith's thinking by seeing a difference in *Organized Crime* and *organized crime* when looking at these attributes. *Organized Crime* is a term for criminal organizations which are structures/ networks/ organizations that congregate on the basis of illegally accumulating funds and power (Paoli & Vander Beken, 2014; Reuter & Paoli, 2020). This *Organized Crime* definition is the reference point for the definition used by the United Nations for example:

“‘organized criminal group’ shall mean a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established in accordance with this Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit (United Nations, 2000).”

This is a seemingly vague definition by design, as the United Nations needs to use their definition as a framework with which criminals can be judged. Hence why clearly the focus lies on the manner of structurization of the persons involved. There has to be a way in which prosecutors can point at defendants as members of organized groups to link them and their crimes to bigger structures. This definition is only not that practical when trying to research on an academic level. This focus on structurization of persons involved in structured crimes is at the center of organized crime definitions used by law enforcement and investigative journalism. Therefore the difference in focus at the center of the definition of organized crime is important as the results of using a different definition are in turn at the center of the frames used by these groups. The term *organized crime* is used by Hagan to look at crimes that need some sort of organization, in this definition the activity is the primary focus when looking at organized crime groups. Here we see the difference in *Who* (capitalized) and *What* (lower case) (Paoli & Vander Beken, 2014). For this thesis I will follow the view of the *What*, meaning that I will focus on the activity of the organized crime group as the primary way of defining the organization. The structure of the organized crime group follows the primary activity.

2.2 What is a Mafia

Although the term organized crime has its roots in the phenomenon of the Italian-American Cosa Nostra, there are some distinctions that separate organized crime from the term 'mafia' (Paoli, 2020). Organized crime is an umbrella term under which various types of groups can be recognized in line with contemporary accounts: biker gangs, street gangs, organized cross border thief gangs and mafias. The clear difference in what constitutes a mafia is different when looking at scholars across the globe. This difference is mainly seen in a very specific kind of activity that mafias focus on. This is why I will use the focus on activities to define this organization as *organized crime*. The structure of the organization will be determined by the activities of that organization. This activity is called *governance* and it is visible in the definition of mafia-type organizations from the Italian Penal Code 416bis:

“Mafia-type unlawful association is said to exist when the participants take advantage of the intimidating power of the association and of the resulting conditions of submission and silence to commit criminal offences, to manage or at all events control, either directly or indirectly, economic activities, concessions, authorizations, public contracts and services, or to obtain unlawful profits or advantages for themselves or for others, or with a view to prevent or limit the freedom to vote, or to get votes for themselves or for others on the occasion of an election (Association of Mafia-Type, 1975).”

Here, a clearer focus on the result of the organization can be seen: the activity of governance. As said in the Penal Code: mafias use intimidating power to reach gains that are more abstract than purely seeking funds from illegal trade as other organized crime groups tend to focus on. It focusses on the

activities of the group and not so much on the organizational structure of the group, which is in line with how Federico Varese states that organized crime should be defined (Varese, 2020, p. 290). Varese, like Paoli and Schelling, states that mafias can be seen as alternative governments inside the state. Seeking governance over businesses, institutions and criminal activities first and foremost (Paoli, 2020; Paoli & Vander Beken, 2014; Schelling, 1971; Varese, 2014). What are the differences between mafias and states then? Varese states:

“Mafias differ from insurgencies and states insofar as “the set of collective action mechanisms that constrains institutions of governance and makes them accountable to the people” are different (Varese 2010, p. 20).”

This focus on governance makes way for a very different manner of seeing organized crime. In the 1960's the focus of organized crime activities was on illegal markets like gambling and narcotics (Varese, 2014). Seeing organized crime groups as enterprises in markets that were prohibited from legal operations, hence seeing the organizational form likened to enterprises (Varese, 2014), rigid top-down structures that resembled companies. Campana and Varese proposed to divide activities of organized crime in 3 distinct groups: production, trade and governance (Varese, 2020). Varese bases his view on Schelling: “*in this view, organized crime is not simply crime that is organized, but it is an activity that produces goods and services, including governance*” (2020, p. 293). Governance is merely one of the types of goods and services that organized crime can bring outside the rule of law. The difference between mafias and other organized crime groups is that mafias can perform in all 3 of these activity groups but focus primary on governance, whereas other organized crime groups do not focus on governance.

“The Mafias instead aim at being a substitute for the State in the territory. Their relationship with the territory is far deeper and wider: not limited to crime, it encompasses all facets of the resident social community, with a particular emphasis on the local political powers and economic activity (Europol, 2021, p. 7).”

This points at a deeper difference between governance and the 2 other groups of activities, pointing at the end goal of governance over production and trade: power over monetary gain.

2.2.1 Traditional and Entrepreneurial Mafia

This difference leads to another very different aspect of mafias in comparison with other organized crime groups and that is their multi-functionality as groups, which by some is pointed to as mafias main defining factor (Paoli, 2008, 2014, 2020; Reuter & Paoli, 2020; Savona, 2012). This multi-functionality can be seen in multiple facets of mafias, for now I will focus on the activities of mafias. Arlacchi divides mafia organizations in two types: *Traditional Mafia* and *Entrepreneurial Mafia*. I will use these phrases

to divide mafia activities albeit with some distinction in how I see this division. While Arlacchi sees these different types of mafias as different types of organizations / socio-cultural attitudes, I see them as two dimensions of what can be the same organization.

Traditional mafia, as Arlacchi puts it, are organized crime groups that focus specifically on governance as their main activity. This is the same definition I used to explain mafias. Although Arlacchi focuses on more socio-cultural factors in his definition of *traditional mafia*, he sees it as an attitude against socio-economic conditions of the mafias home region (Phillips, 2017). This coming from the fact that Arlacchi did not see the mafia as an organization of any kind but a mere attitude against the social norms. However the fact remains that his definition of *traditional mafia* focuses on the activity of governance. Using their intimidating power, also known as illegal governance, to gain monetary profits or other types of gain like in elections. Again, this definition likens a mafia to a state within a state or a Weberian political group:

“The mafia has “political subjectivity”, i.e., exhibits several features of the Weberian political group: a system of rules and norms, an apparatus that ensures they are respected, and the ability to use physical coercion and to exert forms of domination over a specific territory (Sciarrone & Storti, 2014, p. 6)”

I will use the phrasing of *traditional mafia* to define the focus of dimensions of a mafia on illegal governance, because in line with the multi-functionality of mafias I believe that mafias can operate in a multitude of activities at the same time.

The other dimension that Arlacchi touches on is the *entrepreneurial mafia* (Phillips, 2017). The *entrepreneurial mafia* focuses its activities more on monetary gain. This focus on different types of activities, like production and trade, implies that there will be different types of organizational structures that operate in these different types of ‘markets’ for activities (Varese, 2020). Arlacchi states that the *entrepreneurial mafia* is an evolution of the old *traditional mafia*. He states that mafia organizations change from local organized crime groups focused on illegal governance to transnational organizations focused on monetary gain by using different activities (Phillips, 2017). I fundamentally disagree with Arlacchi on this point. I believe that the multi-functionality of mafias can be seen by looking at the diversification of activities. There is no whole organization that binary evolves from traditionally focusing on local governance into transnational drug trafficking organization. When mafias are seen as multifunctional and multidimensional organizations that are more decentralized than top-down enterprise structures, then these organizations can focus on a multiplicity of activities. Even though I disagree, the difference in *entrepreneurial* versus *traditional* does indicate a clear difference in focus on activities and with that makes it possible to differentiate the two. This is why I

will use the typology of Arlacchi, but seeing the two mafias not as different stages in an evolution but as two dimensions of the same organization. As Sciarrone & Storti explain dimensions:

“The mafia’s organizational form includes two dimensions that are combined with each other in a variety of ways (Block, 1980): 1) that of an “organization for illicit trafficking”, which makes it an “enterprise” that operates between the legal and illegal markets; and 2) that of an “organization for control of the territory” of the local societies in which it is embedded. This dimension is cultivated by using the resources of violence and social capital discussed above, whereby the mafia can exercise protection-extortion” (Sciarrone & Storti, 2014, p. 5).

Not only do these different dimensions typify a difference in focus on activities, as stated before the structure of organized crime organization flows from the focus on activities.

2.2.2 Structure Mafias

Arlacchi states that there is an evolution of a mafia organization when an organization transforms from *traditional mafia* organization to an *entrepreneurial mafia* organization. As stated before there is a difference in structure when looking at these different dimensions of mafia organizations. I believe that these dimensions can exist besides each other within the same organization, while there is a difference in how these dimensions are structured.

First there is the structure of the *traditional mafia*. It has long been believed that organized crime groups and following in that thinking mafias are structured very pyramidal and rigidly top-down. However when looking at structures that permit regional illegal governance, this believe ends up problematic. Varese (2020) states that illegal governance as an activity affects the structure as so that there are no big enterprise like organizations, but that there are smaller, local groups that govern local populations and businesses. This makes for a fragmented organization, which may be very hierarchical within the local context, that does not abide by highly developed vertical organizational structures. This hierarchal nature is in a local context very strong. There has to be a chain of command if mafia groups want to illegally govern certain territories, this is however based within small groups belonging to the same overarching organization. These fractured iterations of the same organization have little communication with other iterations as there is no need to collaborate crossing borders into other regions where local illegal governance is performed. How these iterations of an organization can lay claim to belong to the same organization will be explained later when mafia culture will be discussed. It is important to have some belonging to an overarching organization, merely by the fact that it is important when illegally governing to have a clear membership boundaries (Varese, 2014, 2020).

The dimension of the *entrepreneurial mafia* focuses on a different set of activities and therefore will be structured differently. This depends on the specific activity on hand, but for the purpose of this

thesis will be focused on transnational illegal substance trafficking. When the activity is by definition an activity in which borders are crossed, the local character of mafia iterations makes for a lousy business structure. There has to be some form of collaboration and with that a more vertical organizational structure. This is where the illegal enterprise theories get their views from. However these highly vertical structures with strong vertical chains of command, figured like legal enterprises, have become debunked in contemporary times as more and more scholars focus on smaller more fluid networks. This does not necessarily mean that there cannot be a higher chain of command, it does mean that there is more cross border collaboration between iterations of the same organization. This is why mafias are also defined as network organizations. This conceptualization is dominantly used within the academic world and the idea of strong vertical chains of command is visible when looking at the dominant typification used by law enforcement and journalistic sources. This incongruence lies at the heart of the discourse analysis, which will be discussed later. The form of organization depends on the activities participated in, but both dimensions and therefore forms of organization belong to the same organization:

“The mafia’s organizational structure is that of a network organization, with a certain degree of internal cohesion and an appreciable level of openness to the outside. Specifically, mafiosi are bound to each other by strong ties, and with outside social groups by weak ties (Granovetter, 1973). In addition, the organizational relationships between the network’s members may be closer in some cases, looser in others, thus enabling parts of the organization to have more independence. The mafia’s organizational form includes two dimensions that are combined with each other in a variety of ways (Block, 1980): 1) that of an “organization for illicit trafficking”, which makes it an “enterprise” that operates between the legal and illegal markets; and 2) that of an “organization for control of the territory” of the local societies in which it is embedded (Sciarrone & Storti, 2014, p. 5)”

On the lower levels of these activities there is a more fluid and horizontal structure depending on networks, while on the higher levels there are more vertical chains of command, making sure that longer lasting collaboration is secured.

2.2.3 Family Dynasties

As Van de Bunt *et al.* state in *The Social Embeddedness of Organized Crime*:

“Criminal cooperation is usually embedded in existing friendly, familial, or work-related relationships. Collaborating in illicit operations relies heavily on mutual trust. For example, drug smugglers who get “ripped off” are not in a position to ask for police protection and neither are wealthy criminals able to initiate civil action when someone runs off with their money (Reuter, 1983; Paoli 2002, p. 64; Zaitch, 2005). Everything comes down to trust because there is little to no protection from opportunistic behavior. This is why criminal cooperatives are often characterized by strong internal relationships. Criminals prefer working with family members or friends in order to ensure the smooth running of their operations” (Van de Bunt *et al.*, 2014, p. 2).

For mafia organizations that are historically embedded in their home regions, focusing on illegal governance as their main activity, the regionally autonomous iterations of the organization rely on strong bonds of trust for internal relationships. The strongest bond for this internal trust is found in blood ties. While a primary source for internal trust, these familial bonds also serve a purpose when it comes to the longevity of the organization. As stated before within the aspect of the *traditional mafia* the autonomous iterations of the entire mafia organization focus on illegal governance and a main aspect of this is the belonging to an overarching organization, still there is an important aspect of regional dominance that needs to be conveyed. To have longevity as an autonomous iteration that relies on familial bonds for internal trust relationships, Sergi opts to use the *family dynasties* framework to explain the way that mafia organizations create longevity. In this way she explains the way that these autonomous iterations function as a way to convey a ‘brand name’ to secure their position within the primary activity that said iteration focusses on. This will be touched upon in chapter 4. This is beneficial too when looking at transnational organized crime, combining the need for internal trust and the need for external embeddedness in different activities as will be discussed in chapters 5 and 6. The ‘brand name’ of certain iterations within different illegal markets also ensures longevity in these markets, while using the overarching organization as a stronger link to internal trust and external trust by using the ‘brand name’ of the overarching organization.

2.2.4 Summary mafia structure and activities

In this thesis I will define the structure of a mafia organization through the lens of *family dynasties* that are autonomous iterations on regional levels which construct longevity and a ‘brand name’ for themselves, while differences in structure occur by virtue of the primary activity which are divided into *traditional mafia* versus *entrepreneurial mafia*. Seeing these differences in structure in the need for vertical hierarchy within these autonomous *family dynasties* as a primary structure within the *traditional mafia* aspect and vertical chains of command within an overarching organization with vertical chains of command that use the ‘brand names’ of *family dynasties* in the aspect of *entrepreneurial mafia*. These differences in structure come from my positioning on the side of the

organized crime debate that focuses on the activity as the primary focus of organized crime groups, as I feel that the structure of the organization flows from the primary activity. This structure cannot exist solely on the basis of an organizational structure, but it needs something to bind mafia members together and confirm the 'brand name' to the outside world. This binding of mafia members and the confirmation of the brand name will be discussed when looking at the history of the 'Ndrangheta, while the use of the brand name in relation to the *entrepreneurial mafia* dimension will be discussed when looking at the position of the 'Ndrangheta in the European cocaine market. The binding agent used by mafias and the manner of confirming the brand name is mafia culture.

2.2.5 Mafia Culture

The scholarly debate on what the word mafia should encompass until the 1980s was focused on the primary question of whether the mafia existed as an organization at all or if the word should define a culturally loaded behavior (Paoli, 2008). This paradigm presented the mafia as a subcultural attitude and form of power, where single individuals made use of behaviors alike to mafiosi without having a central organizational structure. The etymology of the word mafia is a remainder of this past, as it is derived from the Sicilian word *mafiusu* which means as much as 'swagger' or 'boldness' (Paoli, 2014; The Economic Times, 2018). As stated before I do see a central organizational structure that encompasses a mafia, even though this organizational structure is not as rigidly top-down as the criminal enterprise theories put forward. Not forgoing the paradigm of the subcultural attitude as a whole, I do see a very important role of subcultural behaviorisms within mafia organizations. As discussed in the previous paragraphs the central element of the *family dynasties* as autonomous iterations of mafia organizations do count themselves part of the same central organization (Sergi, 2020b). This is done by way of connecting themselves with each other by using (sub-)culture as glue. This shows itself in mafia culture by using ritualistic rites, a shared mythological history and predominantly shared behaviorisms (Paoli, 2008, 2020; Reuter & Paoli, 2020; Sergi, 2018; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c). Anna Sergi categorizes these shared behaviorisms, within the context of the 'Ndrangheta, under the term *'ndranghetism*. This heralds back to the subcultural attitude and form of power that mafiosi used, the defining difference is only in the fact that *'ndranghetism* connects members of 'Ndrangheta to each other instead of using the paradigm that focused on behavior of individuals that did not belong to any central organization (Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c). In this way the word 'ndrangheta points to two different meanings: first there is the 'Ndrangheta as a central organized crime group and second there is the shared sets of behavior that Sergi defines with *'ndranghetism*. These sets of behavior are learned to new members within the framework of *family dynasties* and connect to the 'brand name' of the organization (Sergi, 2018, 2020b).

This longstanding cultural history and the ensuing sets of behavior that are connected to *'ndrangheta* have a function to set up and maintain what Durkheim calls *mechanical solidarity* (Durkheim, 2010):

“From this chapter it can be seen that a social solidarity which arises because a certain number of states of consciousness are common to all members of the same society. It is this solidarity that repressive law materially embodies, at least in its most essential elements. The share it has in the general integration of society plainly depends on the extent, whether great or small, of social life included in the common consciousness and regulated by it. The more varied the relationships on which that consciousness makes its action felt, the more also it creates ties that bind the individual to the group; the more, consequently, social cohesion derives entirely from this cause and bears its imprint (Durkheim, 1893, p. 64).”

This *mechanical solidarity* is based upon sets of behavior, historical-cultural shared consciousness and common belonging (Sergi, 2018; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c). This collective conscience is based within the sub-cultural belief system but actively shown by the shared behaviors that connect mafia members to each other within their organization. *Mechanical solidarity* created what Smith called *segmentary societies*. As Paoli writes in her book *Mafia Brotherhoods*:

“According to a model prevalent in premodern societies, Cosa Nostra and 'Ndrangheta are “segmentary societies” (Smith 1974), which derives from the replication of homologous corporate and cultural forms. Second, neither Cosa Nostra nor the 'Ndrangheta can be assimilated to Max Weber's ideal type of legal-rational bureaucracy, as Donald Cressey suggested at the end of the 1960s when describing the American Cosa Nostra (1969). Far from recruiting staff and organizing the latter's work according to the criteria and procedures of modern bureaucracies, mafia groups impose a 'status contract' upon their members” (Paoli, 2008, p. 16).

Segmentary societies are societies that are held up because of shared values, lineage and are mostly used to define tribal societies like for example the Hebrews and the Pashtun people in Pakistan (Durkheim, 2010). When looking at mafias as *segmentary societies* where *mechanical solidarity* binds members within culture to each other, the autonomous nature of 'Ndrangheta clans is embedded in a shared group vision that can be compared to tribalism. Only mafias are not tribes but secret societies:

“The individuals belonging to mafia-type criminal organizations make up a secret society, with specific bonds of loyalty and a well-defined hierarchy of control, and act in pursuit of gain, reputation and security” (Sciarrone & Storti, 2014, p. 5).

Hence seeing it still as one organization with autonomous iterations, connected through vertical organizational structures but mostly through culture and shared behaviors. This culture is embedded in the local culture and will be discussed in chapter 4.

2.2.6 'Ndranghetisation

This cultural transmissibility is not only a construct of familial top-down structures that root members in the segmentary society. As Anna Sergi notes, there is also a prominent movement of a phenomenon she calls '*ndranghetisation*'. The process of '*ndranghetisation*' can be seen as the culturally loaded using of the 'Ndrangheta 'brand name'. This brand name is in line with the two meanings of the word 'Ndrangheta: 'Ndrangheta as a consortium and sets of behaviors which she collects under the term '*ndranghetism*'. These sets of behavior are rooted in Calabrian culture, but Calabrian culture is not a unitary set phenomenon just as Calabria is a highly divided region. This means that there is no one unitary culture that the consortium is typified by. There are differences within the consortium. These differences also have a role in what Sergi calls '*ndranghetisation*'. Where *family dynasties* continue the longevity of the 'brand name' of an organization by building internal trust, '*ndranghetisation*' is the process in which other criminal groups from Calabria use the 'Ndrangheta brand name to connect to the shared culture and behavior which holds power or the process of mislabeling Calabrian criminal groups as iterations of the 'Ndrangheta. This means that not only that there are multiple types of mafia culture and '*ndranghetisms*', but also that the whole of mafia culture gets changed by new groups aspiring to be part of a mafia and changing the 'brand name' as a whole in the process or the mislabeling of law enforcement of what the 'Ndrangheta is and thus changing the perception of this phenomenon. This mislabeling is discussed in the discourse analysis of chapter 4.

This means that when in this thesis the name 'Ndrangheta gets used, it refers to the organization as a whole. Keeping in mind the organizational structure, overall shared culture and behaviorisms but mostly that there are differences in clans, cultures and activities that have a major impact in how these 'iterations' of the whole organization function. This why in the thesis I will focus on specific cases and seeing the clans as autonomous organizations that are a part of this whole consortium that gets branded as 'Ndrangheta.

2.3 Mafia Migration

Mafias are often described in literature as *glocal* phenomena, combining the global presence with the notion of the strong local ties that they have with their home regions and the governance that they pursue. These ties lie in the verticality of the consortia but mostly in the strong cultural relationship that it still has while operating in external regions (Paoli, 2008, 2014; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c). This global presence however comes from *mafia migration*, as this is the major factor in mafia presence globally. In this paragraph the migration that will be described is often applied to mafia organizations as a whole, but can also be applicable to certain sub-factions of mafia organizations (Allum, 2014;

Calderoni *et al.*, 2016b; Sergi, 2022; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c). How, when and why there are differences will be explained in the empirical chapters of this thesis.

The debate of mafia migration has seen two contrasting perspectives: *the Free Movement view* and *the No Movement view*, as Varese calls them (Varese, 2020). Varese disagrees with both of these views, seeing his position as somewhat of a middle ground:

“According to the Free Movement view, the presence of mafiosi abroad is the product of a rational strategy to colonize new territory, it is a ubiquitous phenomenon, and entrenchment is easy. Such a view tends to suffer from lack of conceptual clarity and of specification of the phenomenon under study and to rely on exaggerated claims. Other scholars have advanced the contrary view, namely, that mafias never move. This I call the No Movement view. While theoretically elegant, this second position cannot explain the limited yet real phenomenon of mafia presence in new places. It assumes that criminal reputations cannot travel across long distances and that the motherland cannot control its agents when they are far away” (Varese, 2020, p. 291).

I agree with Varese on this point, noting also that context is very important in understanding mafia migration. As Morselli notes when researching push and pull factors of mafia mobility: *‘The most general statement that can be formulated from the present exercise is that the setting matters more than the group itself’* (Morselli *et al.*, 2011). Going with this statement, the focus when looking at mafia migration will be on the setting first and foremost as to why migration occurs. Varese sees three main mechanisms that have different factors and categories explaining different types of each mechanism. First is *Transplantation*, the second is *Functional Diversification* and the last is *Separation*. Sciarrone sees four types of mafia migration: 1. Transplantation 2. Infiltration 3. Hybridization 4. Imitation. These categories are used because Sciarrone divides intentional migration and unintentional migration into separate categories (Sciarrone & Storti, 2014). I will use the theory of Varese because I believe that intentionality is not so much a defining factor, particularly when defining a mafia as a non-unitary organization. I will focus on mafia migration and the versions of this when discussing mafia migration in chapter 5.

2.3.1 Transplantation

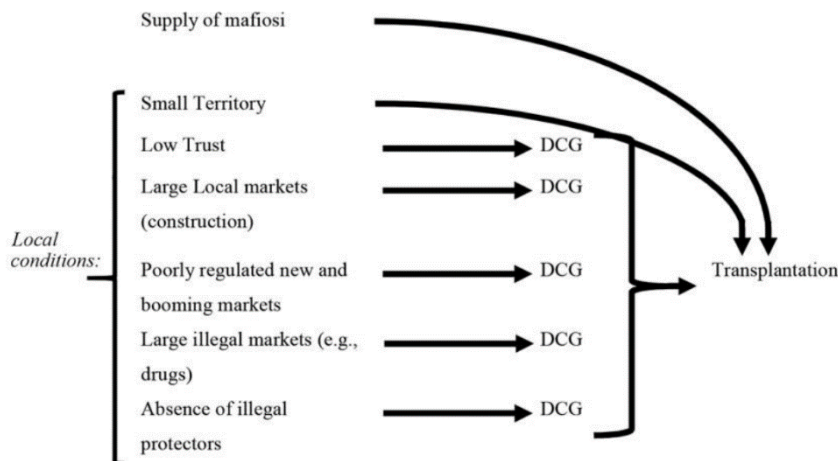
Transplantation is the form of migration that is the most heavily rooted in the migration of members with the focus on governance-type organized crime services, or the dimension *traditional mafia* (Phillips, 2017; Varese, 2020). Varese divides the conditions for *transplantation* in two categories: *‘supply and local conditions that generate a demand for mafia services’* (Varese, 2020, p. 303). The supply category is focused on the emigration of mafia members and the why question behind the migration of members. Which can be condensed to the search of resources. These resources can be a

multitude of things: business opportunities like new markets, investment opportunities for example to launder money but also unintentional factors like migration of people from the mafias homeland, in this case Calabrian's migrating (Allum, 2014; Dagnes *et al.*, 2020; Sciarrone, 2019; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c). There is a distinction in the division of *intentional (strategic)* versus *unintentional supply* (Varese, 2011). The supply being the mafia members that migrate. The category of *local conditions* focuses more on the questions behind the success rate of the transplantation. Varese explains that these local conditions dictate the success of governance-type organized crime in the specific regions that transplantation occurs. Again the setting is the more important factor of mafia migration (Morselli *et al.*, 2011).

'Gambetta (1993) posited that the lower the level of trust among those who break the law, the greater the demand will be for protection services. By guaranteeing pacts and promises, the mafia can facilitate exchanges between criminals who do not trust each other. This implies that mafias are more likely to transplant successfully into places characterized by low levels of trust among both those who respect the law and those who break it (Varese, 2020, p. 305).'

These local conditions are indications of the success rate of what Varese calls the main activity of mafias, that is to govern and offer protection (Varese, 2011, 2014). Varese summarizes these under the term *demand for criminal governance (DCG)* (Varese, 2020). These types of conditions make it easier or harder for mafias to transplant. The clear focus with transplantation being the fact that once migrated the goal of the mafia is to copy the multi-functionality and focus on governance that are prevalent in the dimension of *traditional mafia*. In this way *transplantation* is closely connected to the dimension of *traditional mafia* and the activities that come with that, in turn facilitating the structure of the transplanted mafia organization.

Figure 2.1: Hypotheses for mafia transplantation. Supply of mafiosi is generalized migration and mafiosi migration (intentional/nonintentional)



Source (Varese, 2020, p. 306).

2.3.2 Functional Diversification

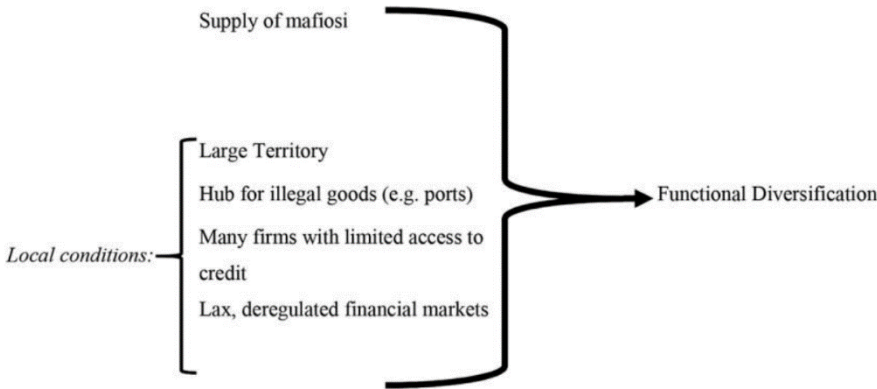
The second category of migration is *Functional Diversification*. This category focuses on the diversification of activities when migrating. Here the *traditional mafia* governance is not necessarily part of the migration process and it again depends on contextual background conditions which of these functions is the primary goal. What sets *functional diversification* apart from *transplantation* is the way that the multi-functionality is not prevalent as a goal in the process of migration, but is more visible by the way the same organization only fulfils one functionality in the region it migrates to. Sciarrone has a comparable concept which he calls *infiltration*, which I have several problems with: first and foremost, I find the term *infiltration* itself to be too open to negative cultural interpretation that it warrants itself to be misused easily. Secondly, Sciarrone focuses more on economic infiltration in the legal world and defines the concept with low embeddedness, which is to be disputed when looking at embeddedness of illegal transnational crimes (Dagnes *et al.*, 2020; Riccardi & Soriana, 2016; Sciarrone, 2019; Sciarrone & Storti, 2014). *Functional diversification* is a broader concept under which more types of economic behaviors can be typified. Whether *functional diversification* is intentional or not is more of a question that is important when looking at specific cases of members migrating. The initial impetus can be very strategic but the migration of different members should not have to be. There can be stark differences in groups that migrate. *Functional diversification* is closely connected to the *entrepreneurial mafia* dimension and the mafia structures that comes from the primary activities (Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016a). What is most often the case with *functional diversification* is the strategic move into a business by setting up a permanent base from which to trade commodities or launder money in certain anonymity (Varese, 2020). This base can be used to organize business in wide area's surrounding this base. This base, dependent on proximity to the home region, can be a transplanted

iteration of a mafia. When researching *functional diversification* it is then wise to research *transplantations* of mafia organizations and in what way these transplanted bases work in accordance with *functionally diversified* members. This will specifically be seen in chapter 7, when mafia migration to the Netherlands is discussed.

2.3.3 Separation

The third category that Varese discusses is *separation*, which is the change in autonomy from transplanted mafia to separate mafia type organization. This happened with the American Cosa Nostra. The first real step before an organization can separate is real *transplantation* however, when researching separation therefore it is necessary to first conclude if *transplantation* is the case (Varese, 2020). As this step is yet to be taken and under research in this thesis, it is unwise to focus on *separation* in this thesis.

Figure 2.2: Hypotheses for mafia functional diversification



Source (Varese, 2020, p. 307)

2.4 Cocaine Markets

To understand the way organized crime groups operate within illegal markets it is vital to understand the way that illegal markets function. Illegal markets are largely artificial creations, constructed on the basis of illegality (Arlacchi, 1998). One could argue that every market is a social construct, but this does not mean that any market behaves in a specific way that is created by the sole fact of laws inhibiting its most vital function. This illegality changes every dynamic in the market from the outset. Not only the dynamics within the market are changed but also the outlook of society on these markets. Monopolization is primary characteristic that has been used to define illegal markets, as Peter Reuter notes: ‘*though for a long time it was assumed that illegal drug markets were typically monopolized, in fact, monopoly control is rare*’ (Reuter, 2014, p. 375). Arlacchi too disapproves of this point, pointing out that illegal markets have much in common with their legal counterparts. *There are buyers and sellers, wholesalers and retailers, go-betweens, importers and distributors, priced structures, balance*

sheets, profits and, though less frequently, losses (Arlacchi, 1998, p. 204). Actors can change roles within the whole of the market, depending on the place and timing in which these actors operate in their respective markets at respective times. Organized crime groups can act as wholesalers and retailers at the same time depending on specific cases and change their role in the market at other moments in time. This can make every case highly subject to context and not able to explain greater structures.

2.4.1 Sectors in illegal markets

Illegal markets can be divided in two main sectors: a *competitive sector* and a *oligopolistic sector* (Arlacchi, 1998; Reuter, 2014; Zaitch, 2002). Arlacchi explains these sectors as follows:

“Competitive [sector] which is occupied by a multiplicity of small and medium-sized, semi-interdependent firms supplying goods and services to final consumers. Second an oligopolistic sector occupied by a limited number of enterprises of varying national background and composition which supply the former sector” (Arlacchi, 1998, p. 204).

This means that the sectors and their configuration of the illegal markets are dependent on the stages in the market. Arlacchi notes different amounts of enterprises that operate in the respective sectors characterizing the sector and their dynamics. Reuter divides illegal drug markets in more than two sectors, using the numbers of participants as a guideline to explain the market as a whole. This results in a distinctive hour-glass shape to the market where the middle of the market is defined by a low amount of participants, being the smugglers, high-level dealers and mid-level dealers (Reuter, 2014). Combining the two theories on illegal drug markets, this stage of the market being the middle-level market distribution is defined by an oligopolistic nature. The role of organizations in the whole of the sector in which they engage at respective stages is in that sense defined by the amount of other organizations that operate in the same sector and the interaction between them. In the *competitive sector* there is a lot more violence to be observed, the high-level and middle-level markets are categorized as less violent because territorial disputes happen less frequently (Pearson & Hobbs, 2001). Arlacchi explains that the higher levels of illegal markets are dominated by multi-functional criminal enterprises that combine economic, political and military recourses to operate in these higher levels, characteristics that fit mafias as explained before (Arlacchi, 1998; Paoli, 2020). This reflects not the constant presence of these types of organizations in only the higher levels and thus oligopolistic sectors of drug markets, but does explain the need for those attributes in these levels. ‘Ndrangheta could in this case be found operating in the lower levels as retailers on the street, but this is mostly the case in the home territory as smaller and more fluid local networks dominate the *competitive sectors* (Arlacchi, 1998; Pearson & Hobbs, 2001). When looking at international territories in transit countries like the Netherlands, where distribution is the main goal of the market, foreign organizations mostly

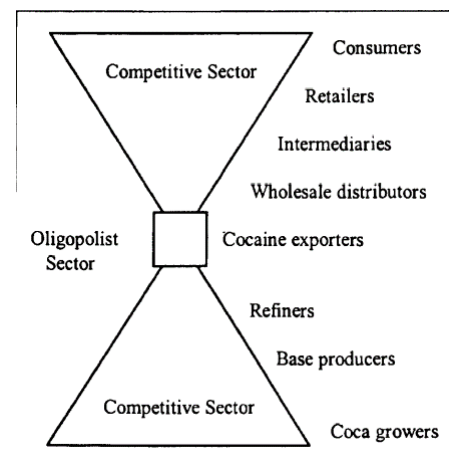
operate in the middle- and high-level market distribution (Pearson & Hobbs, 2001; Van de Bunt *et al.*, 2014; Zaitch, 2002).

2.4.2 Roles in illegal markets

Looking at Figure 2.3 of Zaitch's allocation of roles participants in the whole of the cocaine market there are some roles that are explicitly found in the middle- and high-level market distribution of cocaine (Zaitch, 2002). The most important roles that are fulfilled in this part of the chain are the: Brokers, Wholesalers, Traders and Dealers/Retailers (Arlacchi, 1998; Pearson & Hobbs, 2001; Reuter, 2014). Looking at the figure the wording that Zaitch uses are: cocaine exporters, wholesale distributors, intermediaries and retailers. What are each of those roles and how do these roles interact with each other in the whole of the market?

1. *Cocaine exporters*: Cocaine exporters are organized crime groups that specialize in the trafficking of cocaine from production country to transit/consumption country. They remain relatively in close proximity to the production countries and facilitate the export from said countries to places further removed from the production chain. For cocaine, most of these cocaine exporters are positioned in Latin-America. Sometimes these organizations are also present in the production of cocaine, but their primary function is to traffic cocaine from place to place (Reuter, 2014; Zaitch, 2002).
2. *Wholesale distributors*: Sometimes called wholesalers. Wholesalers are organized crime groups that operate as distribution networks in transit/consumption countries. Using large quantities of funds and good connections with other organized crime groups to import and then divide shipments under other groups of retailers/wholesalers. They collect the shipments and then distribute the shipments to other groups. Most of the of wholesalers are positioned in transit-countries or consumption-countries (Pearson & Hobbs, 2001; Reuter, 2014; Zaitch, 2002).
3. *Brokers/Intermediaries*: Organized crime groups or individuals that build the bridges for others to set up deals. Not committing into the trafficking itself by dealing with cocaine themselves but connecting groups and/or individuals to each other by using funds or reputation as guarantees for safe shipments. Essentially building the bridge between the wholesalers and the cocaine exporters (Pearson & Hobbs, 2001; Reuter, 2014; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016a, 2016c).

Figure 2.1: Structure of cocaine market



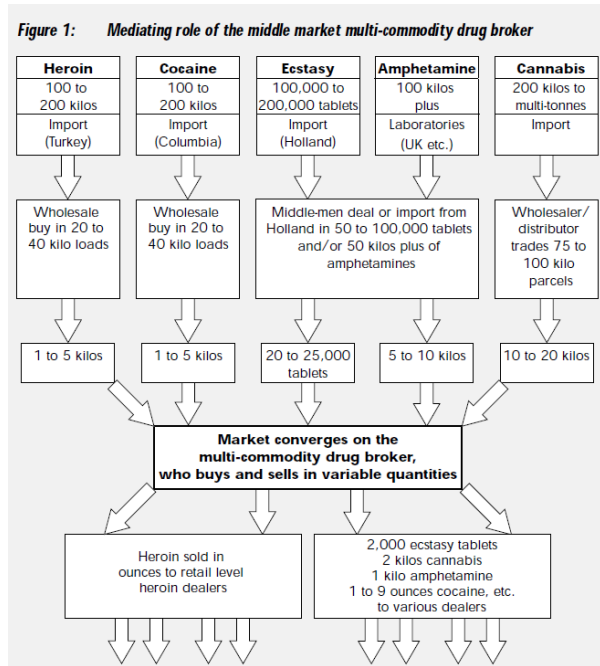
Source (Zaitch, 2002, p. 62)

These bridge-builders often operate internationally, inter-ethnically and/or on the dividing line between 'underworld' and 'upperworld'. Because of this strategic position within and between criminal networks, many depend on them (Kleemans et al., 2002, p. 142).

4. *Retailers/ dealers*: are the foot soldiers of the consumption regions. Importing and buying the cocaine from the actors aforementioned and distributing the cocaine to the consumers.

Transnational drug trafficking organizations that work abroad for the import and further distribution of their products have to work alongside local organized crime groups (Middelaar et al., 2018; Pearson & Hobbs, 2001; Reuter, 2014). The local historical organized crime groups often have a grip on their respective 'home turfs', this means that when mafias want to embed themselves in foreign markets they have to work alongside these organized crime groups. Depending on the role that mafias take up in foreign transit countries, the bond with these local groups changes. The logistical side of illicit trade in Mainports, as they are called in the Netherlands, like ports or airports will often be embedded in these local organized crime groups and thus the role of foreign mafias will most likely be

Figure 2.2: Middle-market from import to retailer



Source (Pearson & Hobbs, 2001, p. 50)

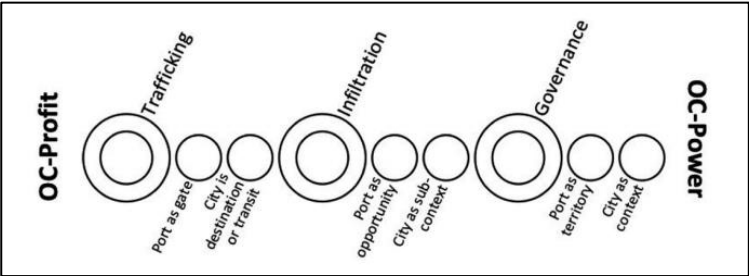
focused on other parts of the distribution chain (Abraham et al., 2021; Bureau Beke, 2021; Middelaar et al., 2018; Staring et al., 2019). Sergi notes a spectrum on which ports can be criminologically framed, from profit driven organized crime groups to power driven organized crime groups.

“Figure 2.5 places the three trajectories of organised crime on two spectra: one moving from the port to the city and the other moving from profit-driven only criminal groups, to mafia-type groups, both profit and power driven. What this graphic summarises is that criminal groups active across the three trajectories of organised crime will have different types of links with the surrounding space and the local economy, and will be more or less visible in the criminal landscape (Sergi, 2021).”

The governance of the ports are an example of the role that local organized crime groups assert, which leads to a process which is vital to understanding the roles that mafia groups can have in foreign cocaine markets (Sergi, 2021): *Delocalization*. Using or working with local groups to facilitate the logistical side of the illicit distribution. The role of *Broker* can be one of the roles that mafia groups can

assert in combination with *delocalization*, by brokering deals with *cocaine exporters* and relying on the logistical expertise of local groups for the distribution and importation process (Reuter, 2014; Sergi, 2021; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016a, 2016c). This way mafia groups can operate as governing organizations in the whole of the market without the need for conflict in the *oligopolistic sector*. There is however one glaring issue that *delocalization* provides in the ability for law enforcement to investigate transnationally active mafia groups, which leads to problems in investigations and sways public opinion. Introduce the Figure:

Figure 2.3. Organised crime power & profit spectrum in the port-city relationship



Source: Sergi (2021, p. 650)

2.5 Mythical Numbers

Delocalization makes it difficult for law enforcement and the judicial system to connect certain organized crime groups to certain roles in illicit distribution chains. Roles like *Brokers* and *Wholesalers* are much more difficult to investigate, even more so when logistical steps and the real handywork in these markets that are operated by local organized crime groups are *delocalized* by foreign mafias (Abraham *et al.*, 2021; Arlacchi, 1998; Pearson & Hobbs, 2001). This makes way for *dark numbers* and by extension can cause the birth of *mythical numbers*. Calderoni bases his definition of *mythical numbers* on Reuter (1984) by saying:

“Mythical numbers are estimates of a phenomenon inevitably overstating its size while lacking empirical support. Nevertheless, they gain acceptance by policy-makers, the media, public opinion and, sometimes, scholars due to their repetition ‘as gospel numbers that have no real basis in fact’. Indeed, practitioners and academics in the crime field often know very well that ‘because an estimate has been used widely by a variety of people who should know what they are talking about, one cannot assume that the estimate is even approximately correct [...] According to Reuter, there are three main reasons for the success of mythical numbers. First, there is no constituency for accurate numbers, while there is interest in keeping figures high. Second, scholars in the field may have no interest in correct estimations. Third, and most importantly, mythical numbers persist because they have almost no impact on policies” (Calderoni, 2014, p. 138).

While in the case of the transatlantic cocaine market one of the factors most noted is the significant *dark number* that makes it difficult to measure the extent of the numbers, this is *dark number* does

not necessarily follow into *mythical numbers*. As Reuter states there are three reasons for the success of *mythical numbers*, when they are accepted as true numbers. The first of these mentions the interest in keeping mythical numbers high, seeing a (political) reasoning behind the bloating of some numbers (Reuter, 1984). In this line of thinking these bloated numbers can function within a process of *Moral Panic*. Within the theory of *Moral Panic* there is a big role for *Moral Entrepreneurs* (Cohen, 1972). If there would be (political) reasoning behind the remained use of *mythical numbers* within the context of the transnational cocaine market, what would be the role of *moral entrepreneurs* and why would these *moral entrepreneurs* fulfil this role? Is the delocalization of certain roles in the middle-market of the cocaine the only reason that mythical numbers exist or are there deeper reasonings behind the existence of *mythical numbers*? First there needs to be confirmation that *mythical numbers* do exist in this field. This will be touched upon in chapter 4. After that the discursive power of some *Moral Entrepreneurs* can be researched. I will not focus on the *Moral Panic Theory* by Cohen. As I do not see a *moral panic* that can be observed but I do see the behavior of what Cohen connects to moral entrepreneurs in this theory to be observed and analyzed in this thesis. However, I will use the frame of *moral entrepreneurs* to distinguish what I see as discursive forces within the security dispositive of the 'Ndrangheta and the role of the 'Ndrangheta in the global cocaine market. While I will not focus as much on mythical numbers in this thesis, besides the use of bloated and unexplained numbers in chapter 4 and 6, I will focus more on Reuters reasons for the success of mythical numbers. Most dominantly the idea that there may be no constituency for accuracy while there may be political interest in keeping numbers high or frames of reality as widely used as possible. The concept of mythical numbers will in a sense be used in a more abstract manner as the focus will be more on the reasoning behind the mythical numbers instead of the analysis being on the difference between the 'real' and mythical numbers. The moral entrepreneurs that will be analyzed are Italian law enforcement agencies and research institutes that are actors in an Italian centric discourse which propagates the use of mythical numbers and certain frames. The underlying reasoning of the use of these numbers and frames being this political interest of keeping the role of certain groups bloated. In my methodology I will explain and dive deeper in what I feel that the *moral entrepreneurs* are that I will analyze.

Chapter 3. Methodology

"A wise guy's always right. Even when he's wrong, he's right."

(Newell, 1997)

In this chapter I will outline the methodology used in this thesis. I will reflect on my epistemological and theoretical stance in deciding on the methods to be used in this thesis. This thesis is focused on a subject within the realm of transnational organized crime, thus I had to be critical of the possibilities and the limits of this thesis. I set out to do qualitative and critical criminological research within what Staring and Van Swaaningen (2009, p. 67) describe as one of the most difficult and challenging fields of qualitative research within the span of less than one year. Hence a combination of open expert interviews and a discourse analysis on Italian state documents and the effect it had on public media was used in this thesis.

First I will outline my epistemological reflection, as this is crucial in the context of the methodology and the boundaries that this research innately has from the starting point of me as a researcher. After this my research design and data analysis will be discussed. This chapter will be conclude by discussing the research quality and the ethical considerations of this research.

3.1 Epistemological reflection

In every qualitative research the researcher is the starting and ending point of the interpretation of their research and therefore it is integral to set apart the facets that make the researcher. My first academic education as a historian has formed the way my worldview has evolved in academia. This background has formed my epistemological perspective with a focus on social constructivism. There is no reality that can be objectively be analyzed as the interpretation of any individual bases the perception of reality within the subjective. This subjective reality is constructed on the basis of culture and experiences and then communicated through language. Language is in this sense a reciprocal means of communication. As the language used to describe certain events and experiences constructs not only the communication but also the perception of these experiences. Language constructs reality and reality constructs language at the same time (Foucault, 1979; Gutting, 1994; Miller, 2016). In this sense Derrida and deconstruction can be felt within the research, with the power of language to build reality. The use of words in constructing this reality is based on the assumptions of individuals and their manner of comparing their subjective interpretation with the interpretation of all else. As context is unavoidable because this context is the reality of the individual (Derrida, 1967). In this way the theories used in this thesis are chosen on the basis of their perceived use for this thesis while the theories themselves are perceived within the reality of the writers that used them. The idea of objectivity that is measured within multiple individuals is then called intersubjectivity, the shared

understanding of subjective realities by individuals sharing common interests and assumptions (Kim, 2006).

This is not only an interesting facet of me as a researcher while forming a theoretical framework, it has consequences for the methods used and my analysis of these methods. In my methods I have relied on semi-structured qualitative interviews and discourse analysis in which I have used the perception of reality and the way that discourse shifts reality to analyze my research question. This research question is embedded in this social constructivist view in which I focus on the perception of organized crime in the form of the 'Ndrangheta and their role in the cocaine market (Miller, 2016). It was not only the focus to collect an objective view of this role, but also research the way that this role is perceived (differently) and how these differences shape actors in the legal world. This does also entail that I follow Van de Port (2009, p. 39) in his view that the underworld is not a shadow world filled with *homines economici*¹ that act out of pure rational agency, but want to add to his view of 'not knowing' that culture may have more influence on organized crime within organizations like the 'Ndrangheta (Staring & van Swaaningen, 2009, p. 39).

3.2 Research Design

The main aim of this thesis was to answer my first research question, focusing on the role of the 'Ndrangheta in the Dutch cocaine market. To answer this question I relied on multiple facets of what would influence the role of an organization in a transnational illegal market. This means the structure of lack thereof of the organization as a whole, migratory routes and *modus operandi* in the cocaine market. Combining these facets in the pursuit of an holistic understanding of the interrelation of these facets in my first main research question:

Research question 1: *"What is the nature of 'Ndrangheta involvement in the Dutch cocaine market based on their global migration and role in the global cocaine market?"*

The first question being the main focus of the research which followed from gaps in academic research, created by a lack of focus on this subject in its totality and specificity. There have been studies that have slightly touched upon the subject or have focused on related subject while not going deeply into the matter itself. This in and of itself would maybe not have been enough to wholly see this subject as enticing enough to research, were it not for the fact that academic research combining these specific facets into one case study were also not realistically conducted These being:

RQ 1: Sub-question 1: *"What is the 'Ndrangheta and how did it historically evolve?"*

¹ *Homo economicus* in plural

RQ 1: Sub-question 2: *How did 'Ndrangheta evolve into an international organization that has links in multiple parts of the world?*

RQ 1: Sub-question 3: *“What is the modus operandi and role of the 'Ndrangheta in the European cocaine market and how has this changed between the 1980s and the early 2000s?”*

RQ 1: Sub-question 4: *“What is the nature of 'Ndrangheta migration and involvement in the Dutch cocaine market since 2006?”*

The second research question, being based in a different epistemological stance, focused on differences in perception of the first research question and in what way these perceptions would shape discourse surrounding the subject.

Research Question 2: *“What effect does framing by Italian moral entrepreneurs have on the discourse surrounding the 'Ndrangheta and the Dutch cocaine market?”*

For the answering of the second research question I will analyse two sub-questions:

RQ 2: Sub-question 1: *“How do Italian law enforcement agencies frame the 'Ndrangheta as an international organized crime group active in the European cocaine market?”*

RQ 2: Sub-question 2: *“How do Italian researchers and investigative journalists frame the 'Ndrangheta as an international organized crime group active in the European cocaine market?”*

RQ1 (and the related sub-questions) seem rooted in the idea that there is some objective role to be perceived when looking at this organization and its place in an illegal market. I will use my perception of this role and the perceptions of the data by myself as construction of my reality of this role. This is one of the reasons why I will try and interpret the construction of reality based on discourse that frames the 'Ndrangheta in a certain role in the second research question and related sub-questions. By focusing on *moral entrepreneurs* from Italy, which I see as law enforcement institutes DIA and DNA and the way that these *moral entrepreneurs* place a frame that is used by the rest of the world.

3.3 Data collection

For answering RQ1 I used a literature analysis combined with open expert interviews. In this way I will try to analyze the *modus operandi* of the 'Ndrangheta in the cocaine market and their migratory behavior to see in what way they have integrated in the Netherlands with a focus on the cocaine market. After this I did a discourse analysis on what I perceive to be *moral entrepreneurs* within this subject in pursuit of answering my second research question within the span of the 4 empirical chapters.

3.3.1 Literature analysis

My pre-criminological education and therefore basis of my perception of academia being a Bachelor in History guided me in the use of literature. This means a use of a narrative review in which elements of a integrative review are used to convey theoretical manners of explaining social constructs while assessing them with empirical data (Snyder, 2019). Using a deductive reasoning combined with a social constructivist epistemological focus on theories to analyze secondary sources (Kim, 2006; Randolph, 2019). Furthermore I try to use this literature to get a holistic and chronological view of the issue.

3.3.2 Open semi-structured expert interviews

Within the context of a thesis written by a Master student within the field of international organized drug criminality by a foreign, relatively unknown, mafia structured on the basis of kinship, there is a level of difficulty in finding adequate and possible methods to gather data. One of the methods that was available was the open interview with experts in the field. In these interviews, I would focus on their knowledge of the subject to guide me where the literature could not and help me find and interpret more information. For this endeavor I structured the potential respondents in multiple categories before approaching them. These categories were structured on the basis of knowledgeability in the form of their discursive and practical consciousness, because the use of the interviews being twofold. There was no focus on the unconsciousness of the respondents (Beyens *et al.*, 2009, p. 191). In my approach to the respondents I detailed my name, study and study institution, the purpose of my study, and their right and option to remain anonymous.

The experts interviewed belonged to the following categories:

1. Criminologists with expertise on Italian organized crime
2. Journalists with expertise on organized crime and the European cocaine market
3. Law enforcement agencies
4. Italian respondents with knowledge on organized crime

3.3.2.1 Accessing Respondents

While reaching out to all four categories of respondents, the fourth category was the first that was eliminated. It became quite clear early on that the practical difficulties with interviewing Italian respondents that did not speak English, were mostly based within the difficult to reach province of Calabria and my monetary capabilities were too much of a setback. Not to mention the fact that the manner of reaching these Italian respondents via the internet were also more difficult than hoped, as there was a high level of non-response with the attempts to reach possible respondents from Italy. This could be from the mere fact that I e-mailed them in a language they could not read or that my e-mails were part of such a large group of interview requests that I did not fall through the cracks. This

could therefore be seen as problems faced within the notification strategy and the lack of rapport being built by that process (Beyens *et al.*, 2009, p. 204). This not only shaped the methodological approach of this research but also the theoretical and empirical side of the research, as I changed the basis of my analysis to a more western European critical stance towards the subject. If in the future someone, me or someone else, does have the ability to interview, what I designated as moral entrepreneurs, on their vision and the way their perception is constructed I believe the research will be even more capable to answer the right questions. I kept the other three categories of experts that I approached and ended up doing 8 expert interviews.

In the first category mentioned, namely the criminologists, there were three criminologists that answered my call and were open to do an interview. These criminologists were Letizia Paoli, Anna Sergi and Federico Varese, all three among the world top experts on organized crime in Italy. While these three respondents answered in the same way than almost all criminologists I approached, which was: *'I do not know enough/anything about this subject so I will not be able to help you or I do not have time to answer your questions'*. These experts were the only three with whom there was good rapport build from the criminological field (Beyens *et al.*, 2009, pp. 205–206). I found out quickly in the endeavor of reaching out to criminologists is difficult as it is and maybe my manner of communication was insufficient. This rapport was built on the basis that the goal of the interview was reciprocal meaning construction, while in the attempts that resulted in non-response this fundamental factor of building the good rapport was unsuccessful (Beyens *et al.*, 2009).

The second category mentioned was the journalistic one. I felt that journalists that are focused on organized crime and specifically the cocaine market or the 'Ndrangheta are the people that hold much empirical knowledge, while having a more grounded view and therefore more direct influence on the public. In the world of organized crime journalism there are set backs to be expected as well, but of a different nature. One of the difficulties is finding journalists that are informed on the 'Ndrangheta in the Netherlands. This is combined by the fact that certain experts from this field are unable to do interviews because of certain safety precautions that have to be made. The experts that were able to be respondents for my interview ended up being from varied specializations and fields. The first respondent from the journalistic world was Jan Meeus, the crime expert of the *NRC* who has followed the Dutch cocaine market for some 10 years up until now. The second was Sanne de Boer, who has written a book on the 'Ndrangheta and the first Dutch journalist that has done so. I had also interviewed Koen Voskuil, the crime expert of *RTL Nieuws* who has done investigative journalism on organized crime for *De Nieuwe Revu* and the *AD* for years and has written a book on the Italian mafia in the Netherlands. The last journalist respondent was an investigative journalist with an expertise on the Latin American cocaine market, who insisted on being anonymised in the thesis.

The third category was the hardest in approaching after the Italian respondents, as this was the category of law enforcement. Through the process of trying to approach respondents from this world I tried law enforcement institutes on multiple levels like: Europol, FIOD, regional Dutch police forces, municipal Dutch police forces, market specific law enforcement like for the Royal Flora Holland and the Dutch National Police. Only the last one was able to give me an interview with a representative, on the basis that I send my earlier works to them for reassurance of my intentions and anonymise their representative. The rest of the institutes assured me that they did: not know anything about or work on the subject nor could disclose classified information on internal affairs and *modus operandi*.

3.3.2.2 Interview preparation

For the preparation of the interviews I reflected on my research question and the literature used upon that point, using this I prepared topic lists that would touch on their respective expertise while leaving room for open interpretation and conversational sidesteps (Beyens *et al.*, 2009). As the expertise of each respondent was fairly specialized I wanted to make use of their specialization as much as I could while staying in line with my own research. This is why I made differing topic lists while keeping the same base topic list throughout each interview. I will refer to this in the Appendix.

3.3.2.3 The Interviews

As I conducted semi-structured interviews with experts in the field, it was essential that I was versed in the specific subject matter before starting the interviews. Seeing as my planning with the interviews was in such a way that the interviews with the biggest experts in the specific academic field were at the end of my data collection phase, this helped with being well versed in the matter. Furthermore I discussed with every one of my respondents if it was okay if I recorded the interview and all agreed, this helped me in developing transcripts for my data analysis (Beyens *et al.*, 2009).

The first interviews I took were with journalists in the Netherlands, which was a good starting point as they were well versed in the field I felt I had less knowledge on: the Dutch cocaine market. The interviews with Koen Voskuil (E1) and Jan Meeus (E2) were both face-to-face and took around one and a half hour each in, besides us, very silent rooms. Both of the respondents were talkative without really taking over the interview and this helped me shape a better view on the Dutch cocaine market and their views on the role of the 'Ndrangheta within it. There was almost no use for probing in these interviews as the most imminent problem was more that the respondents would digress (Beyens *et al.*, 2009, pp. 194–209). The third interview was with Sanne de Boer (E3), who is one of the biggest experts on the 'Ndrangheta in the Netherlands. We met in a café in Amsterdam which was supposed to be fairly quiet on a Monday morning. It was not. This left the audio quality to be not as great as the first two interviews. However, the interview with Sanne de Boer went fairly well besides either of us

being sometimes distracted by noises or other miscellaneous factors. Sanne de Boer had strong opinions on the 'Ndrangheta as an organization in Calabria and thus helped tremendously with further research possibilities and routes to take. She was not that knowledgeable on the role of the 'Ndrangheta in the Dutch cocaine market as she said she found it difficult to form an opinion for herself because her own research on it was in its infancy.

The fourth interview was with the member of the Dutch National Police (E4) and was the most formal of all the interviews. This was the first interview that had to be anonymized for the thesis. As said before, there was a certain checklist to pass before having the possibility to interview this person. The interview took place inside one of the buildings of the National Police and the fact that I ran into problems with parking because of contradictory employees made it that the interview was cut short. This was not a huge problem because the interview was ending its due course when it was cut short. The interview lasted for 49 minutes instead of the hour/one and a half hours of the first four interviews. This was because of the fact that the real inside information I tried to get was classified or could not be elaborated upon because the cases were not yet concluded. The respondent did answer openly on most of the more open questions asked, but the problems came when discussing more in depth into specific cases. Probing and the use of vignettes did not help as the classified nature meant that there was an inescapable wall (Beyens *et al.*, 2009).

The fifth interview was with Letizia Paoli (E5), one of the most important names within the realm of organized crime and Italian mafias. This was the only interview that was asynchronous in space and therefore was also the shortest of all interviews and the one where I ran into most problems (Steenhout, 2009, p. 436). We did an online call, which ran into the problems that were to be expected. We lost connection multiple times and therefore the line of the interview was sometimes a bit chaotic. I learned within the interview that using introductory questions in the whole of the interview was the best strategy as the respondent could elaborate for herself as a real conversation was difficult to be held up. This was also a strategy based on the lack of non-verbal communication that was possible because of the telephone format (Beyens *et al.*, 2009, p. 213). This meant that the interview went fairly well looking at the problems I ran into while the interview lasted. However, because of the online format and the internet difficulties the program used for transcribing saw every word by itself as a sentence. I tried multiple transcript programs and even tried to speed up the audio to help in the process, this all did not help. This meant that the transcript making for this interview took up much more time than anticipated and it was much more difficult to gather information from it. Though, while trying to be fairly nuanced she was quite opinionated on the role of Italian institutions in the construction of discourse and this helped me tremendously.

The sixth interview was with an investigative journalist (E6) specialized in cocaine trafficking in Latin America. The main focus of the interview was to learn more on the way that the 'Ndrangheta had established themselves in Latin America, contemporary changes in the Latin American cocaine market and routes and actors used by European organized crime groups like the 'Ndrangheta. During the interview it became clear that the respondent seemed to know much less than anticipated and thus he could not answer my questions. I tried to mitigate that by using probing, suggestive questioning and vignettes in the interview. This only made me, in my opinion, stand on the negative side of the power relation within the interview. It seemed that the interpersonal interaction was leaning more towards the reality that the interviewer was becoming the respondent. There was still some useful information gathered, but the initial hope was for more (Beyens *et al.*, 2009).

The seventh and eighth respondents were Federico Varese (E7) and Anna Sergi (E8), both expert Italian criminologists located in England. The first one was with Federico Varese in his office at Oxford University. Federico Varese is a very knowledgeable criminologist in the field of organized crime and illegal governance. This focused his opinions on mafias, which made the interview feel somewhat more challenging than I had thought beforehand. However, these views did make it more clear for me how my own opinion was build up. He was opinionated but very nuanced in his thinking and articulation of his opinion, which made it difficult to really dig deep and find more absolute opinions. The respondent was nuanced before the use of probing and vignettes, this made the respondent step out of the more theoretically charged nuancing of the answers (Beyens *et al.*, 2009, pp. 197–199).

The last interview conducted was with Anna Sergi, her name fell in almost every interview conducted up until that point. The interview was on a pub terrace in London which made me hesitant about the quality of the audio, but this was in the end not a real problem. My interview with Anna Sergi was the one I was most nervous about because of the opinionated fire she exuded in every audio clip I had heard from her. In the end the interview lasted for almost two hours and she gave so much information on the 'Ndrangheta, opinions on the discourse and general life advice for dealing with this rabbit hole that I was in the end more afraid of going native than having learned nothing (Beyens *et al.*, 2009, p. 206).

Every interview was recorded and then transcribed automatically using Amberscript, which were then adjusted, corrected and then saved as Word documents. I made use of the analytical spiral of Creswell, using a cyclical manner of analyzing and collecting data for the genre of the case-study. The interviews analyzed were in part starting points for the collection of data in the remaining interviews and discourse analysis (Creswell, 2013, pp. 53–84). Besides the transcripts based on the audio I made notes

during the interview which I then put into one Word document and put into the transcript documents as comments connected to the specific transcript components (Decorte, 2009, pp. 475–477).

3.3.3 Discourse Analysis

In my discourse analysis I wanted to analyze how *moral entrepreneurs* influenced discourse surrounding a field of study that was long overlooked. Because of the ‘newness’ of this field I felt that these *moral entrepreneurs* would have very direct impact on the evolution of frames used to describe the field. The fact that I isolated the moral entrepreneurs that I used was based on what I perceived as a power relation within the geopolitical debate by way of their seniority and perceived expertise. I took the term *moral entrepreneurs* quite broad and therefore defined them as the institutions that less well versed researchers, journalists and therefore public media look to for guidance within their research. This power relation within the context of knowledge and expertise was based primarily on the seniority of these institutions, but also the fact that these institutions vocalized the voices of the region most victimized by the ‘Ndrangheta. This idea of these institutions being directly involved with the victimizing factors of the ‘Ndrangheta gives them a very different starting point within every dispositive as voices from for example the Netherlands are seen as outsiders that would not understand the issue. I felt that there was a sense of *politics of presentation* that was used by these institutions as well to try and fight a perceived sense of power imbalance (Blommaert & Verfaillie, 2009, p. 338). This can obviously more than understandably said about myself as well, being a white blonde haired western European that has never been in Italy for more than 4 weeks at a time.

This being said, I focused primarily on the *Relazione Annuale*’s that the *Direzione Nazionale Anti-Mafia e Anti-Terrorismo* (DNA) and the *Direzione Investigativa Anti-Mafia* (DIA) published in the last 10-15 years. These reports are published annually or semiannually. Secondly I focused on the reports ‘*Ndrangheta Holding 2008* by *Eurispes* and ‘*Ndrangheta has the same turnover as McDonalds and Deutsche Bank* by *Demoskopikas*, two reports by research institutes in Italy that are used heavily by public media in their analysis and interpretation of the ‘Ndrangheta. These sources are found in Appendix 2.

I focused on multiple factors/facets when analyzing the discourse which were corresponding with the codes used in the initial coding stage:

1. The power structure of ‘Ndrangheta
 - a. Enterprise structure vs. horizontal and network based
 - b. Power basis of migrated iterations of the ‘Ndrangheta
 - c. Comparisons to legal businesses and holdings
2. Interpretation of ‘Ndrangheta migration

- a. Colonisation
- b. Infiltration
- 3. Role 'Ndrangheta in cocaine market
 - a. Monopoly
 - b. Control
 - c. Direct involvement overseas import

I coded the reports by starting with open coding and then using the codes used to analyze the interviews in the second phase of axial coding. In this way the codes from the interviews and the codes from the discourse analysis were on the same steps of the ladder of abstraction and made the structuring of codes clearer (Decorte, 2009, pp. 487–492).

3.4 Data Analysis

The data I gathered through my interviews was thematically ordered and analyzed. After transcribing the interviews I listened to the audio again with the transcriptions in front of me so I could make further notes on non-verbal communication that was hearable and could be added to my earlier notes about the non-verbal communication. The notes I made on printed versions of the interviews, on which I color coded my thematic codes. After coding my data I critically looked at overlapping and quality of the themes used in my coding. This led me to cluster overlapping themes in new themes and using new sub-themes. In these new themes and sub-themes I combined codes used in reports and interviews.

3.5 Ethical considerations

I did my research while keeping in mind the line of six basic principles of ethically sound research of the *Research Ethics Framework* by the *European and Social Research Council* (EUR-Lex, 2016; UKRI, 2022). All respondents were offered the option to anonymity in the thesis. Two of my respondents wished that this was the case. The interviews were started by building informed consent by explaining the goals for this research, while keeping possible conclusions to a minimum to help minimize the socially desirability of the answers (Beyens et al., 2009, pp. 202–203; Vander Laenen & O’Gorman, 2009, pp. 564–569). I coded all respondents from E1 to E9 and used these codes in the thesis itself. In the Appendix 1 I put an explanation on the 7 respondents that did not wish to be anonymous and put an anonymous explanation with respondents E4 and E6. Furthermore I permitted the audio recordings of the interviews to be saved on a separate USB stick that I kept at home in a safe place at all times, as to not have these audio recordings leak. The Amberscript program I used to transcribe was protected with a randomly generated password. If there was classified information that I received during interviews, I did not use this in my thesis and I made sure to delete them from the transcripts. This was

all part of the informed consent shared by the respondents and there was no change in methods explained to the respondents (Vander Laenen & O’Gorman, 2009).

3.6 Data Quality

In the pursuit of doing qualitative research from a constructionist epistemology with a strong focus on interpretative causality, the question of validity becomes a difficult one. In this thesis there was a focus on the researches interpretation of the subject matter and the perception of respondents and the way that a discourse was present from the perceptions of what were seen as *moral entrepreneurs*. This focus on *Verstehen* as is central in the use of a case study for the whole of criminological academia (Leys et al., 2009, p. 165). There was no real focus on a strong causality in this thesis and therefore I see the concept of *internal validity* as problematic in qualifying this thesis. Like Seale explains:

“The widespread appeal of postmodern, political, and constructivist conceptions of research is based on some fundamental dissatisfactions with the scientific world view. Quality does matter in qualitative research, but the modernist headings of validity and reliability no longer seem adequate to encapsulate the range of issues that a concern for quality must raise. The constructivist critique of criteriology has led us to see that “quality” is a somewhat elusive phenomenon that cannot be prespecified by methodological rules, though their reconstitution as “guidelines,” to be followed with intelligence and knowledge of the particular research context, may assist us in moving toward good quality work” (Seale, 1999, p. 471).

As causality is part of the interpretative realm of reality perception within individuals, objective causality is difficultly found, but there are guidelines to follow in the pursuit of ‘quality’. These guidelines are focused around the idea of *triangulation*. I have tried to triangulate the knowledge and perceptions of the subject by comparing multiple sides of the subject within qualitative semi-structured interviews while comparing differences in interpretation within the discourse analysis. As Silverman sees triangulation within the realm of constructionist views:

“Silverman (1993) presents an argument that moves triangulation toward a constructivist paradigm. At first, he makes the subtle realist point that triangulation exercises can deepen understanding as a part of a fallibilistic approach to fieldwork, although being themselves no guarantee of validity.

[...]

This version of triangulation, then, which is now very close to Cicourel’s view, gets away from the idea of convergence on a fixed point and accepts a view of research as revealing multiple constructed realities, something that triangulation, now conceived as the revelation of difference, is well suited to expose” (Seale, 1999, p. 474).

With this in mind I have tried to address multiple perceptions in the hope to compare and see how these perceptions influence each other. The possibility of generalization of the research is also bound within the problems faced with causality. When there is no real focus on causality, the idea of generalization can be prone to difficulty as well. However, by basing this thesis in social theory and combining theories from multiple sub-sections of criminology this research does deliver in moving the academic debate forward. The idea that this case-study delves deeper into the complexity of subjects like these can maybe not be used to generalize this specific study, but more so generalize the methods and theories used in this thesis. In this way, there can be some form of generalization by looking at the natural interdependence of factors (Leys *et al.*, 2009, p. 163). However, the centrality of self-perception and interpretation by the researcher makes the research highly dependable on questioning of the reliability of the research and researcher itself.

This means that when one is critical on his/her research, the starting point is also a self-critique. Seeing as this was the first time that I had done research on this scale and the first time that it was based on qualitative data collection, much improvement can be achieved. The semi-structured interviews that I had were the first set of interviews that I had ever done and thus it was a steep learning curve at first. While all respondents were enthusiastic to be interviewed, there must be critically looked upon the perception that some may have had. A blonde historian that wanted to break eggs by researching cocaine trafficking and the Italian mafia because he had read some books and articles. This thesis was done on a purely independent basis and was not linked to any company or other intern program. This made the research based upon purely personal interpretation with no academic interference from third parties. However, this did mean real negative consequences when trying to interview Dutch law enforcement agencies. Even when I did have the chance of interviewing someone from law enforcement, this independence and therefore lack of connections in the field meant that there was a real wall build. As explained by a respondent:

“In Italy they are always happy that someone wants to have information from abroad, because they always want more attention to that. Anyway there it is always easier to get, because they want to create awareness then. In the Netherlands it is very difficult (E3, personal communication, April 4, 2022).”

This quote tells a two sided story which relates to this self-critique. First there is the fact that an outsider of the police in the Netherlands does not get the same inside info that they may have gotten in Italy. The second critique is the fact that I do not speak Italian at such a level that I could have used this perceived willingness by Italian law enforcement. As I have explained, I did not travel to Italy to interview respondents or do deeper research there. These factors are all central in the understanding of the limitations of the researcher, the centrality of personal bias and therefore the manner in which other researchers would come to the same conclusions given the same data (Leys *et al.*, 2009; Maesschalck, 2009; Seale, 1999).

3.7 Research strengths and limitations

Summing up, the way that this research describes this case can offer new critical outlooks when extrapolating the theories and methods used looking at different cases in an under-researched subject field. The combination of middle-market distribution, mafia migration and critical reflection on what an organization like the ‘Ndrangheta entails is criminological research that combines multiple ‘new’ fields. These fields do have a strong combining factor and are in my eyes keys to doing macro level research that can be used in academia, law enforcement and public media alike. It can be argued that there is a much too strong focus on importation, retail markets and usage of drugs than there is on the middle distribution in which a great deal of organizations make their wealth.

Summing up the data limitations and therefore limitations of this research: I do believe that while I am an interested and critical researcher, the person that I am as a researcher at the moment is not the most ideal person to excel at this research. I have struggled to find my way and these struggles have found itself in my thesis, there have been many times that I was overwhelmed by the contents because it was my first time dealing with such a scale of content. The personal limitation of funds and ability to speak Italian also affected this thesis negatively.

Still, I could formulate answers to both my research question and I do believe that I have offered some insight into why this subject is necessary for research. I strongly believe that a more experienced, well versed and more capable criminologist would have had even greater results in researching this subject. Furthermore I do believe that the thesis warrants itself for deeper exploration of the subject or the respective factors that make up the subject. On this premise I can only recommend that this subject is investigated further, be it by law enforcement or academia.

Chapter 4. ‘Ndrangheta explained: the Freemasons of crime

“*Che successe successe², fuck it.*”

(Scorsese, 2019)

In this chapter, I will discuss the ‘Ndrangheta as an organized crime group. When writing a thesis on the ‘Ndrangheta it is central that there is a clear distinction in how the organization is categorized. This is the first empirical chapter and it will focus on answering the first sub-question of RQ1:

What is the ‘Ndrangheta and how did it historically evolve?

Starting in the 19th century, around the time of the *Risorgimento*, also known as the Unification of Italy from 1820 until 1870, I will look at the organization that the ‘Ndrangheta was born out of. After this, I will discuss the alternative history that ‘ndranghetisti believe in which perpetuates the most important element of what ‘Ndrangheta is in my view: the ‘Ndrangheta brand that is rooted in culture. The structure of the ‘Ndrangheta will be discussed after and my critiques on the schematic overviews that law enforcement and the judiciary primarily propagate, I will root my critique in the culture of ‘Ndrangheta again. The brand and culture are again very important elements in the last paragraph of the chapter in which I discuss *‘ndranghetisation*.

4.1 The ‘Ndrangheta: a historical perspective

The unification of Italy is, like with the Cosa Nostra and the Camorra, heavily influential in the origins of what is now known as ‘Ndrangheta. In the times of the unification Calabria, as with the other regions in the *Mezzogiorno* like Campania (Naples) and Sicily, belonged to the Bourbon-ruled Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. When the country of Italy was united by the conquest of Garibaldi in the south, there was a power vacuum that was filled by groups of criminals that had been given power by big landowners in the years prior, as guards of the rural villas (Ciconte, 2014; Dickie, 2011; Riall, 1994). These groups would evolve into what is today known as the three major Italian mafias; Cosa Nostra, Camorra and ‘Ndrangheta. Before the name ‘Ndrangheta was used, there are documents from the Italian judiciary from the 1860s that mention among other names: bands of *camorristi* or members of the *picciotteria*³. These documents show groups of men that extort the local population, are involved in prostitution and cattle rustling (de Boer, 2020; Dickie, 2016; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009). These men are most of the time regular everyday laborers, peasants or waiters and the jobs of these *picciotti* vary from case to case. The only thing that is very prevalent among all of these men is that every one of them has had a prison sentence (Dickie, 2011). This had an impact on the evolution of the organization in later years.

² Whatever happens, happens

³ Comes from *picciotti*. *Picciotti* can be best translated as: young men or the English slang word *lads*

These *picciotti* were organized in small bands that were bounded by family bonds. They operated independently from groups in other parts of Calabria (de Boer, 2020). The mountainous terrain combined with the poor status of most of Calabria's inhabitants, meaning that there were no fast travel options available, made Calabria a very diverse region (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c). As multiple scholars suggest there were and therefore are multiple *Calabrie* as described below:

“Calabria is a highly fragmented region, culturally, geographically, and demographically. Some of these conditions date back to the unification of Italy and before, and are very visible to a keen eye visiting the area. Not only the distances, the roads, and the natural landscapes change significantly from one area of Calabria to the other, but also political settings, civil society's traits, and industrialization processes are quite different across the region. Some of the most eminent historians in the area have often talked about many (plural) *Calabrie* (Cingari 1982; Sergi 1993).”

In this line of thinking, there was no central organization or central cultural background that bound these loose bands of criminals together. It can be argued that there still is no unitary structure within what we now call 'Ndrangheta, and like Anna Sergi explained during the interview:

“I don't agree with the unitary structure of the Ndrangheta. What I see is a unified brand. And then within the brand different manifestations of the same behaviour, which is this Ndranghetism that I talk about (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022).”

This raises the question: What is 'Ndrangheta? If it is not a unitary organization but a unified brand as Sergi calls it, how did that brand originate from small local bands of bandits that focused on illegal governance independently from other groups in Calabria?

4.1.1 'Ndrangheta's founding myth

To answer this question, one example of how the 'Ndrangheta sees itself is exemplary in showing how outsiders can see the organization. This example is the origins that members themselves believe in: Members of 'Ndrangheta believe in the genesis of the mafia at the hands of three legendary Spanish knights: *Oso*, *Mastrosso* and *Carcagnosso* (Ciconte, 2014; Dickie, 2011; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009). These three knights were brothers and they had a sister. They were also members of the mythical *Garduña*, a Spanish religious order that strikes a great resemblance to the Italian mafias. When the honor of this sister was besmeared by another knight, the three brothers killed this man. They were imprisoned on the Italian island of Favignana (Wordpress, 2015). There they founded the three *Onorata Società's*, honoured societies, of Italy. *Oso* founded the Cosa Nostra in Sicily, *Mastrosso*

founded the 'Ndrangheta in Calabria and *Carcagnosso* founded the Camorra in Naples and Campania⁴ (Dickie, 2011; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009). This belief in a founding myth, rooted in alternative history, is exemplary of the esoteric and mythical nature of the belief system that the 'Ndrangheta binds their members in (Paoli, 2008, 2020; Sergi, 2018). They are not merely a band of criminals, but they are an honored society founded by Medieval knights. Not only the existence of a founding myth is exemplary for the almost religious roots of the organization, but also very strong cultural ties with the Catholic religion are prevalent in this myth. There are three knights and like in the Catholic faith the number three is a holy number in 'Ndrangheta culture (Sergi, 2018). With this myth, 'ndranghetisti connect with the other mafias in Italy on a deeper level than just being criminals from the same country. This idea of being a sacred, honored society that operates in a different world than the outside world is fundamental in understanding the organization. We can see this idea in videos of meetings, songs and written ritualistic codes. This idea is at the root of the unitary 'Ndrangheta brand that Sergi talks about. Like the artist El Domingo sings on his album *Musica della Mafia*:

“ 'ndrangheta, camurra e mafia

E Societa organizzata

'ndrangheta, camurra e mafia

Sicilia, Napoli, Calabria onorata (El Domingo, 2011)”⁵

Figure 4.1: Osso, Mastrosso and Carcagnosso



Source (Wordpress, 2015)

4.1.2 From prison gang to honored society

This connection came through the penal system in which these *picciotti* came to be living in prisons alongside other mafiosi from the *Mezzogiorno*, where they formed connections and taught each other their ways. The Camorra and the 'Ndrangheta started as prison gangs that governed the prisons in late 18th century Italy. They organized governance inside the prison and took that system into the outside world. This governance took form as being states within the prisons, safekeeping the rules that the 'Ndrangheta and Camorra set upon the other prisoners, collecting protection money and governing the illegal markets within the prisons (Dickie, 2011). The esoteric nature of the internal culture was taught to these mafias by a different group of prisoners in late 19th century Italy: Freemasons. Secret

⁴ Sometimes the roles in founding the mafias of Mastrosso and Carcagnosso get switched, making it that Carcagnosso is the founding father of 'Ndrangheta

⁵ Translation relates roughly to: The 'Ndrangheta, Camorra and the Mafia. Form this organized society. The 'Ndrangheta, Camorra and the Mafia. Honourable Calabria, Sicily and Naples.

societies such as the Freemasons were very important in the process of the Unification of Italy and before this happened were incarcerated in great numbers by the authoritarian Bourbon regime. The Camorra and 'Ndrangheta in a way became the armed force working together with the Freemasons in the Unification of Italy and along the way the mafias learned a lot from the Freemasons (Dickie, 2011; Riall, 1994). Due to cross-pollination the Freemasons taught members of the mafias the ways of binding members in the organization with a deeper sense of belonging, creating the idea that members were the chosen ones belonging to an honored society. Much of the esoteric nature of the 'Ndrangheta can be compared to rituals and symbolic meanings from the Freemasonry (Ciconte, 2014; de Boer, 2020; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009). There are numerous links between the Freemasons and the 'Ndrangheta when looking at the inner symbolisms. Central figures in the symbolic guiding and protection of the 'Ndrangheta are Mazzini and Garibaldi (Paoli, 2008; Sauviller & Di Rosa, 2016). Two primary Freemasons that were protagonists in the Unification of Italy (Riall, 1994). It can also be argued that the name *picciotteria* is a heralding back to the *picciotti* of Garibaldi, the name given to his armed urban mob. The connections with the Freemasons run deeper and have further implications for the way that 'Ndrangheta has operated in more recent history (Paoli, 2014). However, the most important historical implications of the connection between the 'Ndrangheta and the Freemasons is in the way that the Freemasonry helped build the brand of 'Ndrangheta and the way that brand connects not only 'ndranghetisti internally but also helped connect the three Italian mafias as a cultural phenomenon (Sauviller & Di Rosa, 2016; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c). This is the main manner in which structure is consolidated in 'Ndrangheta: myths, culture and history. From prisons in the late 19th century the 'Ndrangheta consolidated itself as a brand that is more structurally powerful than the schematics that scholars, journalists and employees of the judiciary use. This is why it is the most important factor to keep in mind when researching the 'Ndrangheta.

“Not even prison can destroy those myths; actually, it contributes to perpetuate them. The possibility to communicate and meet in prison, from different clans and different extractions, is certainly something that benefits many organized crime groups (Sergi, 2022, p. 204).”

The most active way of perpetuating culture is in the way that mafias see themselves and behave accordingly. During the time since the Unification of Italy, the word *picciotteria* was replaced by the word 'Ndrangheta. This word encompasses the rich history of Calabria. The word actually comes from Greek, being derived from the word ἀνδραγαθία or *andragathía* which means something comparable to 'heroism' or 'honored' (de Boer, 2020; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009; Turone, 2008). In this line the word 'Ndrangheta now means 'society of honored men' (Sergi, 2016, 2018). The remains of the cultural origins of the word can be seen in the Calabrian dialect nowadays with a word very similar to the Sicilian word *mafiusu*. Anna Sergi defines this with the verb '*ndranghitari* or '*ndranghitijàri*, which she

defines as a set of 'intimidating behavior without being intimidating' (CICC, 2017; Sergi, 2018). She modernizes this by using the word '*Ndranghetism*, collecting the sets of behavior under one term (Sergi, 2018; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c). Nowadays the word mafia can equate to a combination of things and for this thesis I will follow Anna Sergi in her definition of '*Ndrangheta*. Sergi defines '*Ndrangheta* as a twofold word, seeing the organization and set of behaviors (Sergi, 2018). This does not mean that the two are separate, as the cultural-behavioral aspect is integral in the organization of any mafia-type organization. Historian John Dickie defines the mafias as 'the Freemasons of crime', which is an apt description, but leaves more to be desired. It does however define the inner structure based on secrecy and alternative history like the Freemasons (Dickie, 2011, 2013, 2016). The reality of the founding of the '*Ndrangheta* is in my opinion mostly to be found in the governance that Calabrian criminals exhibited in the prison system of 19th century Italy and the use of revolutionary powers as their armed wing. These aspects were taken by the Calabrian criminals and used in their region of origins on the residents there, organizing themselves as a state within a state where they would rule Calabria as the Italian state did not. The mythical aspect of the inner structure and alternative history should in my opinion be seen in a light similar to what historian Eric Hobsbawm calls the *invention of tradition*. Using the perceived historical relevancy of the organization to embed members in it and embed itself in the local communities (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). These traditions and myths made the '*Ndrangheta* a sort of bigger than life organization that had traditional regional embeddedness while also giving the members of the organization the feeling that they were part of this 'society of the chosen'.

4.2 Family is everything

While this esoteric nature of the internal culture is very important in the way the '*Ndrangheta* sees itself and is realistically structured, this does not fully explain the way '*Ndrangheta* was organized from its origin. '*Ndrangheta* started as local groups of criminals that focused on governance as their main activity, using their family bonds as the primary organizational structure. Because governance is the primary activity/function in Calabria, this influences its original structure (Ciconte, 2014; Varese, 2014, 2020). '*Ndrangheta* is typified as a 'horizontal Mafia' (KLPD, 2011; *Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie*, 2017; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c). This distinction is mostly made in the media to diversify the organization from what most people historically know as what mafias are structurally based like (*De Limburger*, 2018; *De Limburger*, 2008; *Leeuwarder Courant*, 2010; NRC, 2007, 2018). Again, like so much in the realm of organized crime, it is a comparison with the Italian-American Cosa Nostra and the view on its organizational structure. As mentioned before, this organizational structure is typified by an extremely top-down corporation-like structure (Fijnaut & Paoli, 2006; Paoli, 2008). This contradicts the view of Varese on how he defines governance-type organized crime groups'

organizational structures. Varese explains that governance-type organized crime groups have a rather horizontal and fractured organizational structure, with each iteration of said organized crime group controlling their territories where they collect protection money or *pizzo*, govern illegal markets, divide public procurements under their associates for example (Varese, 2020). In the case of 'Ndrangheta, this fractionalized iteration of 'Ndrangheta is what Sergi calls the backbone of the organization, the family (Sergi, 2020a). 'Ndrangheta families are what constitutes the organizational structure, they are autonomous and highly hierarchical. Members of 'Ndrangheta are connected by culture and by bloodline. Intra-marriage is one of the main ways to connect these families and families that are connected through bloodlines are what make up the *'ndrine*. An *'ndrina* is an 'Ndrangheta family, also sometimes called a clan. These 'ndrine bear the name of the families that make up the 'ndrina, for example the *Nirta-Strangio 'ndrina* or the *Commisso 'ndrina*. These 'ndrine started as governing bodies in the rural areas where they originated, ruling autonomously in these areas and having little contact with other 'ndrine. The boss of a 'ndrina is predominantly the *Pater Familias*, often called a *Capobastone* (Ciconte, 2014; de Boer, 2020; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009; Sauviller & Di Rosa, 2016).

In her paper *'Ndrangheta Dynasties: A Conceptual and Operational Framework for the Cross-Border Policing of the Calabrian Mafia'*, Sergi points towards a new framework of understanding 'Ndrangheta's organizational structure's most important factor, the family, as family dynasties (Sergi, 2020a). While this focuses more on the economic behavior that 'Ndrangheta uses. It does go to show how important the family is, not only in the regional power it tries to convey in Calabria, but also when dominating markets in other places. The importance of family in 'Ndrangheta is many parts of the equation. While law enforcement and the media focus on the familial ties that bind 'Ndrangheta members, making for the low amount of *pentiti*⁶ and the cultural element that makes membership to the organization so easily explainable (de Boer, 2020; Dickie, 2011, 2013; E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009), Sergi uses it to explain the way that lineage and longevity are perpetuated within 'Ndrangheta families using these Family Dynasties. Each 'ndrina specializes in certain areas of criminal behavior, educating the future of this 'ndrina from birth. Not only does this make sure that knowledge and power stay internal within the family, but it also perpetuates the brand of that specific family and its legacy which is rooted in history (Sergi, 2020a).

While the most important aspect of 'Ndrangheta is still at its base level the familial bonds and structure (Sergi, 2020a). Multiple layers make up the organizational structure. Like with most organized crime groups, this can be said for almost every organization, these vertical layers were constructed because of expansion (Paoli, 1998). This expansion can be in the form of growth in membership, power or the

⁶ Mafia turncoats are called *pentiti* in Italian

exploration of new markets. Layers have been constructed to deal with new ventures and this has happened mostly accompanied by conflict within the organization (Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009). When 'Ndrangheta was focused primarily on governance within small territories there was no great need for vertical layers of command within the organization (Varese, 2014). The exploration of new markets and ensuing conflict over the need to explore these new markets marked the evolution of 'Ndrangheta into a multi-faceted and layered organization, like with the trafficking of cocaine. While it cannot be said that there was no collaboration before, there was. Clans collaborated before the step in the cocaine trade, cooperating in more short-term crimes with the use of so-called *Action Groups* (Paoli, 2020; Reuter & Paoli, 2020). Which were small groups that would disband after committing certain crimes like cattle rustling or kidnapping. The influx of extreme wealth with the need for longer logistical cooperation experienced in the drug trade meant that a different kind of long-term collaboration had to be established. Sergi (2016a) writes about two levels of collaboration that were important in the way that 'Ndrangheta progressed into the European cocaine market:

“First level is internal: the clans have learned how to cooperate among themselves, in terms of drug importations, risk sharing, and crisis management. The second level is external: the wealthiest clans in terms of money and men power (including access to brokers and facilitators) are able to import large quantities of drugs directly from the producer countries thanks to their connections with other organized crime groups across Europe as well. This successful internal and external collaboration has progressively allowed for the acquisition and consolidation of the roles of various clans in the drug trade both at the importation and at the distribution stage, as well as the solidification of significant power to influence their partners around the world (Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016a, p. 76).”

These types of collaboration are in my eyes more akin to soft collaboration in which the clans remain autonomous within their own expertise, but cooperate by combining their respective expertise to penetrate the cocaine market. These types of soft collaboration can be called *consorzi* or singular a *consorzio*. I will use the term *consorzi* to define this soft collaboration. A *consorzio* is the evolution of the so-called *Action Groups* noted before. These *consorzi* are built on cooperating 'ndrine that are present in criminal markets like the cocaine market. They combine the historical expertise of multiple 'ndrine, based on their respective *family dynasty*, and form cooperations to be present in bigger operations within these markets. To be more precise, one 'ndrina is financially capable to finance and be a guarantor of a certain criminal activity while other 'ndrine are employed to do the logistical work or launder the money generated with the respective activity. This way collaboration over longer periods of time is achieved while every involved 'ndrina prospers because of it. There are however more strict ways of collaboration within the 'Ndrangheta that elude to stronger verticality within the organization.

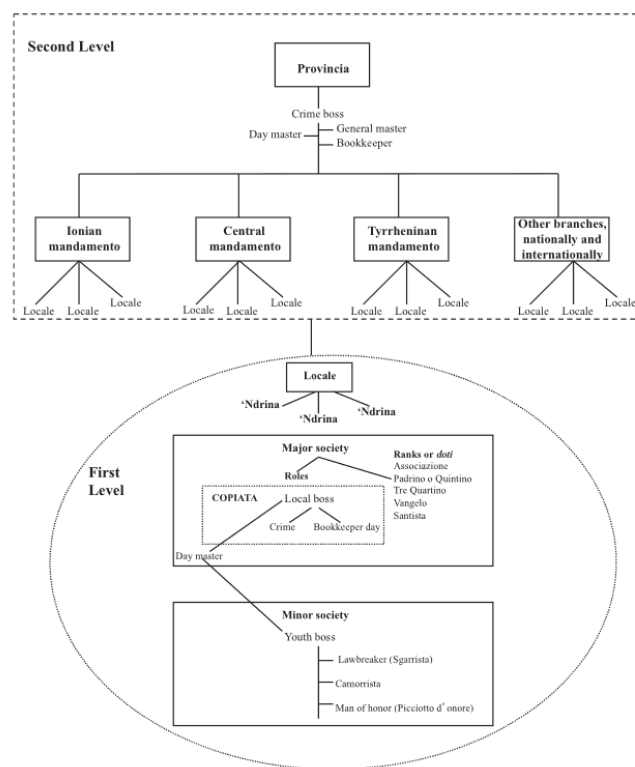
4.2.1 Locali and Mandamenti: steps of the Pyramid

Although 'ndrine are autonomous within their region of influence, the region where they operate as governance-type organized crime, there are more vertical organizational structures within connecting spheres of influence called *Locali and Mandamenti*.

"What is horizontal about it? Is that it, in fact from time immemorial, some clans, families, have had their own piece of land and they got permission from the higher entity, whatever that was at the time. To carry out their 'Ndrangheta extortion there. And that's how it stayed, despite the fact that the 'Ndrangheta has changed a lot, you still have that. Everyone can go about their business on their own turf. Except for the things that concern everyone, then they need permission from a higher layer (E3, personal communication, April 4, 2022).

When business encompasses more people, there are higher layers that are used. The first of these are *Locali*. These *Locali* are made up of multiple 'ndrine within the same region. *Locali* are used to influence bigger area's by force of connected clans that cooperate. There is a recognition between these families that cooperation will yield less conflict and better control over the area. Within the *Locale* there are two levels, which are called the *Società Minore* and the *Società Maggiore*. The *Società Minore* is the level that encompasses the younger members of 'Ndrangheta that are responsible for the heavy work on the ground, they are the foot soldiers of the organization and do not have great insight in the greater

Figure 4.2: Formal structure of the 'Ndrangheta



Source (Catino, 2014, p.193)

whole of the organization. The *Società Maggiore* is the higher level in which there is collaboration between higher ranking members of the 'ndrine within the *Locale*. There is a three headed board of each *Locale*: the *Contabile* (accountant), the *Mastro di Giornata* (master of the day)⁷ and the *Crimine* (crime)⁸. This board gets overseen by the *Capo Locale* or *Capo Bastone* (Ciconte, 2014; Gratteri &

⁷ The *Mastro di Giornata* is responsible for the flow of information within the *Locale*.

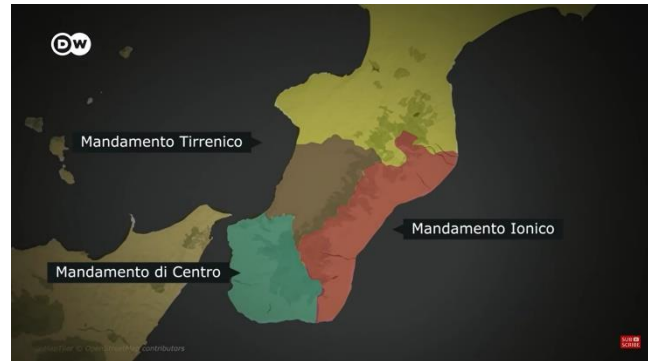
⁸ The *Crimine* is responsible for the execution of the illegal side of the *Locale*.

Nicaso, 2009; Sciarrone, 2014). In this way each region has a supervisory board that controls the area and there is a direct point of communication for external 'ndranghetisti. The name of the *Locale* comes from the location that the *Locale* belongs to, for example the *San Luca Locale* (Sciarrone, 2014). These *locali* together form three regions that exist within the province of Calabria: *Ionico (Montagna)*⁹, *Città (Centro)*¹⁰ and *Tirrenica (Piana)*¹¹.

These three regions are called *Mandamenti* and therefore the *locali* that make up the *Mandamenti* come together once a year to form the *Provincia* or *Crimine* (from now on called *Crimine*). Each year the *Crimine* elect

a *Capo Crimine* that heads the 'Ndrangheta for a year (de Boer, 2020; DW, 2021). Although this is a title that eludes to a very important role in the organization, it is not like the *Capo Crimine* has any legitimate power over the organization. It is more a mediating role and a protector of the rites, rituals and secret codes that encompass the 'Ndrangheta. Furthermore, every year at the *Crimine* the next year will be strategically discussed and possible feuds are discussed (Ciconte, 2014; de Boer, 2020; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009).

Figure 4.3: Map of the Mandamenti in Calabria)



Source (DW, 2021)

4.2.2 Criticisms on the Pyramid

However, how does this relate to my earlier remarks that there is no unitary 'Ndrangheta structure? These vertical layers do elude to a strong opposition to the horizontality that gets ascribed to the 'Ndrangheta.

"Yes, Camorra is a flatter organization: a lot of horizontally oriented groups but also a lot of conflict, especially in Italy. And the 'Ndrangheta is even more pyramidal, we shouldn't say that because that is no longer the case, that was Cosa Nostra very much. But you could see 'Ndrangheta as: there is indeed a nucleus, where there is a kind of rulership. And from that, indeed, come some regional clubs that are all neatly related to each other again..... (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022)."

There are autonomous families that operate in their own area, focusing historically on governance as their main activity. Whereby this activity of governance makes for the autonomous and fractured nature of the organization (Varese, 2014). However there are numerous vertical layers of command

⁹ Ionian Coast or Mountain, referring to the Aspromonte

¹⁰ City, referring to the city of Reggio Calabria

¹¹ The Tyrrhenian coast or the Plain of Gioia Tauro

ensuring that there is no conflict within the organization. Then what does this nucleus in which power resides mean and where do these vertical structures come from if the organization is so horizontal? The connections that were made to conclude that there were multiple vertical layers came from *Operation Crimine*, an operation that evidenced that there were vertical layers, that there was a unitary structure above all this and that the 'Ndrangheta is a unitary organization (de Boer, 2020; de Jong & Voskuil, 2017; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009). My data from the interviews points to a different reasoning:

“But my view on... so Operation Crimine was a political operation. [...] Political in the sense of justice. There was nothing new in Operation Crimine that we didn't know already. And so Crimine managed to do, to bring to justice what was the attempt in the district prosecutor's office of Reggio Calabria for at least 20 years? Yeah. So since Operation Olympia, mostly that's where we see this idea of Operation Crimine, which happened technically in 2008, was already in the pipeline for at least 20 years. All right. So since 1998, 90. Well, actually, even before that 1994, we had several operations in the District of Columbia. So it is political in the sense that they needed the prosecutors needed to finally have a sentence that said, this is the 'Ndrangheta and this is how it's organized so that the 416bis requirements were met, which meant that after that moment, it was going to be much easier to prosecute what was happening before Operation Crimine was that obviously had it's been since the seventies at least that we have trials against 'Ndrangheta members. But it's always very difficult to prove that someone belongs to an organization if the organization is not recognized as a mafia. So that's the difference with Crimine. So Crimine was the basically the Palermo way of investigating after Giovanni Falcone onwards brought into Calabria.

[...]

With the maxi trial, the big one with Giovanni Falcone's trials, which essentially says, okay, in order for us to prove that there is a mafia organization, we need to find the organization's infrastructures in a way, architecture (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022). “

And as Sanne de Boer said:

"For the judiciary, it is very important to always show that they belong to the 'Ndrangheta, and she (Anna Sergi) actually criticizes that as well. And so that's very complex, because they have to do that somewhere, that box has to be ticked. But then maybe as soon as it looks like they are a loose organization. Then the clan has an advantage, because they can say: yes, we are just a group of people who happened to do something once. We don't want to be tried for mafia-like crimes and they don't have that *aggravanti*¹² (E3, personal communication, April 4, 2022).”

¹² Aggravating circumstances of mafia membership. With penal code 416bis, a convicted mafia member will receive a greater level of security and isolation.

There is a logical and judicial reasoning behind the construction of the *Crimine* and the *Mandamenti* as powerful vertical structures that organize the 'Ndrangheta into a unitary organized crime group. This does not mean that these layers do not exist, it merely means that these structures do not hold up to the pyramidal structure like they personified in Cosa Nostra and have to hold up in order to be put under 416bis. There is hierarchy in the 'Ndrangheta, the formal structures simply are not where hierarchy is found.

“So that's why I said that's why I went with the legal perspective, because the legal perspective is the one that needs the unity of the Ndrangheta. We don't as criminologist, I mean, I don't have to agree on that. I can be critical of that because what I see is not a unity, a unified organization (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022).”

This understanding of the 'Ndrangheta as a unitary organization does not only come from *Operation Crimine*, but from the basis of Italian mafia combatting itself. This was pioneered in Italy by Giovanni Falcone and like Sergi said in the quote, the focus of law enforcement should be on the architecture of the mafia organization (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022). This architectural focus was first used on the Cosa Nostra in Sicily and was based on the RICO laws in the United States which were first massively used on the Cosa Nostra there (Fijnaut & Paoli, 2006; Paoli, 2014). This made it so that the understanding of mafias as organizations and organized crime as a whole is seen through the lens of the Cosa Nostra. I explained in my theoretical framework that this can be said for the whole of organized crime as well. The architecture that was found in the Cosa Nostra was highly pyramidal and this meant that the base understanding of mafias was based on this pyramidal organized crime discourse (Catino, 2014; C. Fijnaut & Paoli, 2006; Paoli, 2020):

“The idea of organized crime has been developed in the United States and for a long time the debate on organized crime was only in the United States. It was later exported to other countries (E5, personal communication, May 3, 2022).”

This is the reason that *Operation Crimine* investigated the vertical power structures in the 'Ndrangheta. This construction of the 'Ndrangheta's power structures may not have been sufficient. However, it does construct the view of this organization. The construction of reality is reciprocal. What I mean by this is that the way that the 'Ndrangheta is constructed by Italian law enforcement constructed the way that 'Ndrangheta is seen ever since *Operation Crimine*. However, as the years have passed the differences between the 'Ndrangheta and Cosa Nostra have been highlighted more and more. These differences and the questions that arise because of this renders the old view problematic. This is why the 'Ndrangheta gets constructed by focusing on differences with the Cosa Nostra and their likening to an international holding. I will focus on this later in the chapter.

Another effect of *Operation Crimine*, which is also linked to an important event in 2007, is the fact that the 'Ndrangheta has been put on the agenda in Europe as it became the 'new' mafia to securitize. Because of the way that the 'Ndrangheta had long been seen as a rural and harmless group, the most important voices in the provision of information and guidance on the 'Ndrangheta became Italian magistrates and research institutes. This in and of itself is not problematic. The fact that experts from the country of origin have become the most important voices and therefore moral entrepreneurs is naturally understandable. There is however a downside to this and this is linked to the focus of these experts on Italy and their incapability in the English language. This shifts the discourse because Italy has become a territory which is sometimes indistinguishable from the rest of Europe:

E5: Most of them hardly speak English, but they just think from the point of view of the region, which is quite peripheral.

[...]

J.B.S.: But do you think they seem to overemphasize the role of the Ndrangheta and bloat these numbers in a way because they say it's like 50 billion in revenue every year and then a lot of media takes off on that. But why would the Italian government really want that kind of attention to that organization?

E5: I think for several reasons. First of all, as I said, that due to lack of knowledge. So as I said, I really believe that most of these law enforcement officers are in good faith. They truly believe what they saying. They truly believe that also the foreign police forces, the foreign prosecutor's offices should give them much more support than they actually receive. They are not really, I think, fully aware also of the difficulties that the other police forces and prosecutor's officers have. I mean, they can arrest somebody or that sentence only if it's clear that this guy has committed a specific crime. That is not sufficient. In Germany, with the Netherlands to arrest and convict somebody for 20 years just because he's a member of the ['Ndrangheta]. So that's not a sufficient reason not to give somebody a lengthy prison sentence. And I think they don't get that. It is you also I think first, partially you really also to this ambiguity of the terms of organized crime. For them, Italian people, organized crime really consists of the mafia. And they are also convinced, I talked to some of them even recently that, you know, the Italian experience should be taken as a model for the rest of Europe and that they should really get much more support than they get. I mean until now it's really their lens that makes them prone to exaggerations. So they are equal, free. And then of course, I mean, how like they're also some personal ego's. But I really feel that they are in good faith, but they don't read foreign newspapers so they don't know about other groups. Organized crime for them is the mafia and their really fixated on that and that's why they emphasize that (E5, personal communication, May 3, 2022)."

However, these are the people that others in Europe turn to. In *Operation Crimine* Italian law enforcement emphasized a vertical power structure and therefore the 'Ndrangheta could be assigned the label of mafia for the judiciary. This why this view was exported. However, the focus on Italy and

discursive power of these *moral entrepreneurs* has to be critically seen. This is one of the most central points of why and how my discourse analysis will be done. Starting with the fact that I dispute the unitary structure of the 'Ndrangheta. However, while I dispute the unitary structure and will focus on the evolution of the discourse surrounding the 'Ndrangheta later, how do I see the power structures of the 'Ndrangheta? If the 'ndrine are independent, how does this mafia function? "*The history of the Ndrangheta is what saves you, because the Ndrangheta is a very conservative force.*" (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022).¹³ As I stated before the primary way in which structure is consolidated in the 'Ndrangheta is through history, myths and culture. Although there is collaboration between 'ndrine, this collaboration is mostly focused on the *entrepreneurial dimension*, with the use of *consorzi*, of the 'Ndrangheta and depends on the history, myths and culture more to see verticality in the organization than the formal vertical structures.

4.3 L'Arberu da Scienza: culture as glue

'Ndranghetisti see the 'Ndrangheta as a tree, *l'Arberu da Scienza*¹³. At the bottom, where the roots of the tree are, there are the *Capi*. The *sgarrista's*, or more important members, are the stem, they are the heavy lifters. The branches of the tree are their lower levelled members. At the top there are the leaves, these are the associates that they use. The higher up you go, the wider the tree becomes. This symbolizes the way that as the tree grows, the 'Ndrangheta grows. As the tree grows, the more leaves it gets. As the tree grows, the roots become more entangled in the ground (Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009). Nowhere this is more apparent than in 'Ndrangheta's home region of Calabria. Calabria is where the 'Ndrangheta is most entangled, from the most minute daily activities to the biggest regional projects. From *café paggato*¹⁴ to the construction of Gioia Taura Port (Sergi, 2022; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c).

Like explained in preceding paragraphs, the culture of 'Ndrangheta with its esoteric symbolism is based on influences from the Freemasonry, although the symbolism of the freemasonry was not the only element that 'Ndrangheta culture is based upon. The culture of 'Ndrangheta is very much based upon Calabrian culture. Symbols of the catholic faith not only penetrate the esoteric part of the organization but also the very real power dynamics of 'Ndrangheta. While there are big differences in the plural *Calabrie*, and therefore great differences in 'Ndrangheta culture, there is an overarching culture which holds very real power dynamics. The main organizational structure that the whole of 'Ndrangheta is based upon is the family and even though there are formal structures like the *Crimine* that operate as organizational constructs, the focus is always on the family. Some families more than others. While the theory of Operation Crimine is that 'Ndrangheta constructed formal vertical structures to safeguard

¹³ Calabrian for: The Tree of knowledge

¹⁴ Paying for someone else's coffee. A relational transaction that has a lot of weight and consequences in mafia heavy regions like Calabria.

themselves in the expansion of the organization and to make it possible to operate in transregional activities, this may not be the best explanation of their power structures. As an example I will expand on the last quote by giving the whole answer that Anna Sergi gave:

“The history of the Ndrangheta is what saves you, because the Ndrangheta is a very conservative force. They do not change much in a way, even if they seem like they change, but they really don't and they really don't because whenever something is kind shaky, whether it's, you know, a police operation that is trying to dismantle a clan or there's something wrong with a shipment of drugs, or whenever something is a problem, you see that certain families, more than others, not only emerge as keepers of the order, but they assume the discretion role. Not every family has a discretion role, some families. And I can tell I can tell you which family already, depending on where you are in Calabria, will be the gatekeeper for the area. Some, every family in the Ndrangheta is the same, but some are more important than others (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022).”

Here Sergi says that some families are the keepers of order, not the vertical structures that supposedly do that. There are multiple ways of designating the 'Ndrangheta as an organization, capturing the essence is a difficult task. Some call it an organized crime holding (de Jong & Voskuil, 2017; *De Stentor/Gelders Dagblad*, 2008; E1, personal communication, September 29, 2021a; NRC, 2009a), some call it a consortium (Paoli, 2008, 2020), some call it an archipelagos (Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c). This is all a way to put into one word the organizational tree that encompasses the whole of the organization. All of these words are chosen to count in the multitude of activities that the whole of the 'Ndrangheta is embedded in: from the *traditional mafia* dimension of governance over territories by the use of *pizzo* to the more *entrepreneurial mafia* aspects of drug, arms and human trafficking, credit card fraud, environmental crimes like illegally dumping/ burning chemical compounds and defrauding the EU of subsidies (de Boer, 2020; E3, personal communication, April 4, 2022; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009; Sergi, 2020a; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c). A single organization that is active in all of these criminal enterprises while having a power nucleus instead of a real top-down enterprise like structure is hard to encompass in one word and makes for confusing explanations when not understood properly. However I find that it is more important to look at the real internal power dynamics instead of finding a single organizational structure. To put into one word the internal power dynamics that make up the 'Ndrangheta I propose the word *Cultural Aristocracy*. There are no formal vertical structures that make up the power dynamics as much as some of the most important families in the 'Ndrangheta (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022; Sergi, 2022). The area of Calabria changes the families that are dominant and the historical explanation for their dominance. This cultural dominance is so prevalent that there are clear examples of this when looking beyond Calabria. As the 'Ndrangheta globalized, this *Cultural Aristocracy* migrated with it. This is the nucleus that the National Police

member was talking about, even though they might not have meant it like that (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022).

4.3.1 Money, the root of all evil?

Another cultural aspect of 'Ndrangheta culture that is important to note is the way that money and the display of power in a visible way is not part of the culture. The 'Ndrangheta comes from an agricultural society. From their historical focus on the *traditional mafia dimension* within this agricultural society, the way that the 'Ndrangheta manifested power was in more subtle ways than driving luxury cars and overtly bragging:

“E4: There's still a difference there and I think the camorra has a bit more trouble with that as in there's still some flashiness in there. Yes, abroad, not necessarily. But yes, the footage of [Raffaele] Imperiale's arrest also went all over the news, so if you saw how he lived that was quite, and that was obviously a headliner, but that was pretty delirious. But of the 'ndrangheta there is still that origin anyway of that peasant community, and the Cosa Nostra also did that very well for a very long time, the moment you are a fugitive or the moment you need to keep the attention off you for a while, they were not in big palaces. It is the story of the Mafia boss¹⁵ who sat in a shed somewhere with a bottle of mineral water and a goat for milk, and that was it. That's where he sat for years... they're very good at that, so it also takes precedence. Of course. In the end, everyone says crime is all about money. That's right. Money is what they are after. But what is very important for Italian mafia, think for the 'Ndrangheta certainly, is power. And power they don't see so much as something that manifests itself in an appearance. That's just in yes, what happens when I say yes or no? How far does my power go? That's not in outward appearances.

J.B.S.: It's in favours for example right? Sanne de Boer explains it very much on a cultural level at least, because you have very much a culture of envy in Calabria so the evil eye, my girlfriend is Turkish, so I recognised that very much. That's very deep in that culture and visible in just little things. I asked her also about this: if you don't have to pay for anything, so why would you make money then? But it's about the idea that you don't have to pay. Right?

E4: Yes, because then with that you can indicate: I'm so important, I'm so influential that I indeed [have the power to not pay] yes and besides that, a lot of money goes..... Sometimes they may not even know what to do with that money, but they don't necessarily need anything. It's about possession (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022).”

This factor of their culture is important because it is deeply ingrained in the thinking of the 'ndrine, but it helps the 'ndrine because of the ways that this manifests itself in foreign countries and the effect

¹⁵ The example is a reference to Bernardo Provenzano, the *Capo dei Capi* of the Cosa Nostra after Toto Riina. Provenzano evaded law enforcement for 43 years by hiding in small sheds with little resources available.

that has on law enforcement. The idea that organized crime is about money and showing off that money is ingrained in Western European law enforcement and because of that misunderstanding of 'Ndrangheta culture difficulties arise in investigating the 'Ndrangheta. This can be related to the focus of the 'Ndrangheta on the *traditional mafia dimension* and the way that the entrepreneurial mafia dimension coincides with it. With the 'Ndrangheta everything is about power and that power is mostly visible in subtle ways, ingrained in historical socio-cultural facets of the Calabrian culture. Letizia Paoli explained that there is always a tension between money and power, but that does not necessarily mean that money directly influences power:

“If you compare the 'Ndrangheta with the Cosa Nostra. Then again, if you look at the newspapers articles, so you see like for example, who was arrested, who is the new boss of the bosses of the Cosa Nostra? This was an old guy, used to be a jeweler. And so he was certainly not the super-rich. The 'Ndrangheta has a similar culture. I think there is a kind of a tension between money and power. On the one hand, there are a lot of people who are busy with drug trafficking and earn a quite a lot of money. Sometimes some of them also try to make their wealth count also in the dynamics of the 'Ndrangheta to transform this money into power, into authority. But there is no guarantee that does really work, since also there are also more traditional voices and traditional chiefs and these might still have more authority than the people who make more money (E5, personal communication, May 3, 2022).”

The difficulty to grasp the 'Ndrangheta for European law enforcement because of the known standard of the mafia being the pyramidal structure of the Cosa Nostra warrants a different approach in discourse surrounding the 'Ndrangheta. While most media discuss the horizontal structure, there seems to be a need for more graspable connections to be made. These connections are made by connecting the 'Ndrangheta to their wealth and therefore perceived influence. The thing is, the 'Ndrangheta does not flaunt their wealth like discussed in the preceding paragraph. This is, in my opinion, why most media outlets focus on the revenue and compare this to capitalistic standards like known businesses:

“Last year the 'Ndrangheta—a criminal organization from Calabria, a region that forms the toe of Italy's boot—raked in more than \$75.3 billion. Which, as reported by the Guardian in March, is equivalent to revenue of McDonald's and Deutsche Bank combined, or 3.5 per cent of Italy's GDP in 2013. It did this through, among other things, extortion, usury, gambling, prostitution, and the trafficking of both drugs and humans (VICE, 2017).”

These comparisons come from Italian research institutes, journalists and magistrates who focus on the revenues and comparisons with known business enterprises to compel people to care. These investigations are not always based on real evidence and sometimes that is discussed in the articles of public media about these numbers:

“At least, that's according to the Demoskopika research institute in Italy. It has become a habit of Italian research institutes to come out with stuff like this and their methodology is not always that scientific.

[...]

A more rigorous evaluation might drastically lower the numbers. And in fact, one has done just that. For a truly reliable estimate, we should wait for the Organized Crime Portfolio to report back at the end of this year, but until then, the most valid appraisals come from TransCrime. The crime research center reckon that in 2013 Italian mafias took in around \$1.5 billion, or roughly 0.7 percent of last year's Italian GDP. Of this, \$5.5 billion ends up in the 'Ndrangheta syndicate's hands (VICE, 2017).”

While this is admirable, the fact that the titles of these articles focus on the overestimations of these researches and consequent comparisons to known businesses makes it so that most readers remember these statistics better than the critical notes placed in the article itself. A couple of examples of these titles are: *Italian mafia remains Europe's largest business* (Business AM, 2008), *Italy's largest company; 'Ndrangheta, the Calabrian mafia, has annual turnover of 44 billion* (NRC, 2009a) and *Mafia Calabria is 'mix of al-Qaida and McDonald's'* (De Stentor/Gelders Dagblad, 2008). These statistics come from moral entrepreneurs in the form of Italian research bureaus like *Eurispes*, *Demoskopika* and Italian business association *Confesercenti*:

“Take that figure of 150 billion. The FIAT group, the largest industrial group in Italy, has a turnover of about 50 billion a year. In other words, the Mafia is the largest economy in Italy and one of the largest in Europe,” Saviano said in an interview. The figures are more or less confirmed in a report by the Italian business association *Confesercenti*. According to the report, the Mafia is a "large holding company" whose turnover is 130 billion euros and profits approach 70 billion euros. The turnover is generated through arms trafficking, drug smuggling, extortion, usurious loans, illegal gambling and prostitution. In total, it accounts for 6% of Italy's GDP. *Confesercenti* represents 270,000 companies and traders. On a daily basis, the mafia collects some 250 million euros; most of it is invested in real estate and business acquisitions (Business AM, 2008).”

These organizations publish reports in which there is a use of lacking methodology and focus on mythical numbers to gain traction in their battle against the 'Ndrangheta. These *mythical numbers* are combined with comparisons to known businesses and naming the 'Ndrangheta a criminal holding or company itself. This eludes to a top-down enterprise structure in which all decisions are purely rationally made:

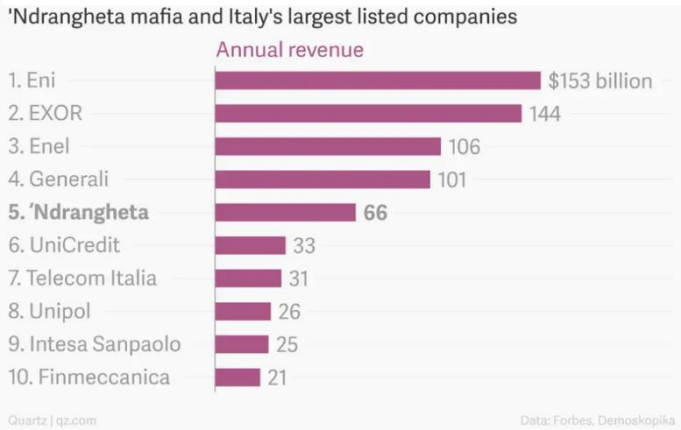
“With that bounty, 'Ndrangheta acts as a sort of holding company, Eurispes said. It is like a majority shareholder that provides satellite operations -- in this case, the clans -- a network to move people and products, Eurispes said. Drug trafficking alone accounts for an estimated 62 percent of 'Ndrangheta's illegal profits (Spolar, 2008).”

This is the way that these organizations try to make the ‘Ndrangheta graspable for the general public, framing them as a new form of organized crime that controls illegal markets like legal businesses control legal markets. In the most famous book written on the ‘Ndrangheta by magistrate Nicola Gratteri and Antonio Nicaso the ‘Ndrangheta is called a company as well:

“With an annual turnover of \$44 billion - not even counting the proceeds of black money laundering - the 'Ndrangheta is Italy's richest, most aggressive, most influential "company," the company that has managed to infiltrate the economy and public institutions better than any business, but also the only company that is truly globalized, with branches in almost every region of Italy and ramifications in Europe, Africa, Asia, America and Oceania (Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009, pp. 9–10). “

This is another example of the way that the moral entrepreneurs from Italy’s law enforcement and judiciary try to characterize the ‘Ndrangheta as something that people from outside Italy could understand. The comparisons to legal companies will be discussed as they are used to describe other facets of the ‘Ndrangheta as well.

Figure 4.4: 'Ndrangheta positioned within Italy's largest listed Companies



Source (Demoskopika, 2014)

Power resides where people believe it resides. This becomes more clear when looking at examples within the ‘Ndrangheta itself too. To look at the ‘Ndrangheta clearly, it is important to see the ‘ndrine that hold *Cultural Aristocracy*, because the families that hold the power are more influential than the formal layers that *Operation Crimine* focused on. This is most visible when looking at San Luca and Platì, the heart and the brain of ‘Ndrangheta.

4.3.2 The Heart and the Brain of 'Ndrangheta

The center of Calabria, culturally, is the Aspromonte and the Sanctuary of the *Madonna di Polsi*. The yearly celebration of the *Madonna di Polsi* on the 2nd of September has thousands of Calabrians flock to the sanctuary (de Boer, 2020). The cultural heritage of the sanctuary can be compared to a motherly relationship that the Madonna has with the region (Sergi, 2022). This has been very much taken by the 'Ndrangheta, the special religious and symbolic meaning that the Madonna has

Figure 4.5: Yearly procession at the Sanctuary of the Madonna di Polsi



Source (Turismo Reggio Calabria, 2022)

with the region is visible in the 'Ndrangheta. The way that 'Ndrangheta takes Calabrian culture and makes it their own has been called a perversion of Calabrian culture, a twisted way of changing the culture into a criminal glue that connects members (de Boer, 2020; E3, personal communication, April 4, 2022). The sanctuary of Polsi is found in the municipality of San Luca, a small town with roughly 3900 inhabitants. Although this is a small town, because of the territorial ownership of the sanctuary, it holds a very strong meaning within the 'Ndrangheta. San Luca is the capital of the 'Ndrangheta, being the *Capo Locale* of San Luca is like being *Capo Crimine* (Ciconte, 2014; Sauviller & Di Rosa, 2016). The oldest and most feared clans come from San Luca, family names that pop up everywhere when researching the 'Ndrangheta: *Pelle, Vottari, Romeo, Nirta, Strangio, Giorgi* (Ciconte, 2014; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009). San Luca is referred to as *Mammasantissima*¹⁶, the birth place of the 'Ndrangheta in a symbolic sense and heralding back to the Virgin Mary (Sauviller & Di Rosa, 2016). San Luca is the heart of the 'Ndrangheta. The place where the rituals, rites and symbolism are safeguarded (Serenata, 2014; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c). The families from San Luca are to be feared and respected. This is where the *Cultural Aristocracy* is the most historically embedded in 'Ndrangheta culture:

¹⁶ The most holy mother in Italian.

E8: “But at the same time the San Luca people are the one. They are the guarantor of the Ndrangheta holds, they are the one where the main clans used to go to and kind of be deferential with. And they also happen to be the ones who migrated in Germany and in parts of Australia and but not that much.”

J.B.S.: “But is that more... or does that have like an historical reason or is it just because of migration?”

E8: “It is mostly the fact that they are the only ones who for a number of years, decades, who detained the now we call the Crimine function in the Ndrangheta. Yeah. So Antonio Nirta was Capo Crimine for God knows how long. One of the Strangio's was Capo Crimine. Pino Strangio, who is a very difficult figure to pinpoint, is a priest and he has been convicted last January with nine years of prison. We are still waiting for the appeal. I mean, it's still up in the air. But it was a very important thing because for many, many years he was the rector, the director/ rector, as we call it, of the Polsi sanctuary. So they had this very important territorial function. Yeah. And that's why they were the ones able to kill in Duisburg because they don't need anyone else approval to do anything. That's the thing (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022).”

If San Luca is the heart of ‘Ndrangheta, then Platì is the brain of the ‘Ndrangheta (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009). Platì is a village approximately as big as San Luca. Like San Luca it is situated in the Aspromonte area, and the rise of the Platì ‘ndrine was linked to this proximity to the mountains. The Platì ‘ndrine cemented themselves in the ‘Ndrangheta when they came up with the plan to start kidnapping people for ransom, using the mountains as their hiding grounds (de Boer, 2020; E3, personal communication, April 4, 2022; Sauviller & Di Rosa, 2016):

Figure 4.6: 'Platì shoots, San Luca learns'



Source (Radio Venere, 2022)

“The Platí families are the ones who engineered the kidnappings. So they are the one. They were the one at the time, particularly well versed into the new ways of making crime quickly or making money quickly.”

[...]

“The San Luca ones were always the more conservative ones, so they were the one that kind of like when the Platí people said: 'Let's do this!', and they were the ones that said: 'Hang on. We might not want to do this.' So between these two, we, that's why we say the Platí people are the one with the [brains of the 'Ndrangheta]. They are the violent ones. They are the ones with the bunkers. They are the ones with all this narrative around them about being really nasty people (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022).”

This triggered the Italian Season of Kidnappings, in which there were hundreds of kidnappings from 1969 until 1994 (Ciconte, 2014; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009; Sauviller & Di Rosa, 2016). This Season of Kidnappings is not only important to the increase in standing of the Platí 'ndrine, but more for the way that the Season of Kidnappings severely increased the monetary capacities of the 'Ndrangheta as a whole (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c). The estimations differ wildly on how much the 'ndrine earned with the kidnappings, but they seem to be centered around a total of 400 million euro's that was paid to multiple organized crime groups like the *Cosa Nostra* and the Sardinian *Anonima Sarda*. From this 400 million the 'Ndrangheta are estimated to have gotten more than half, so around 200 million euros are estimated to have been earned by the 'ndrine from the Aspromonte (Deep Dive: Exploring Organized Crime, 2022a). Still, the amount of money is of secondary importance. The fact that the amount was large is more important than the exact amount. The Platí people collaborated with the other 'ndrine and used this collaboration to make these vast amounts of money and become leaders of the *entrepreneurial mafia* dimension of the 'Ndrangheta. Names of 'ndrine from Platí like for example *Barbaro*, *Trimboli* and *Sergi* are almost as well known as the traditional names from San Luca. The funds that the kidnappings had given the 'Ndrangheta was fundamental in the evolution of the organization from a strictly one dimensional *Traditional Mafia* focusing on governance within the rural province of Calabria to a multi-dimensional and multi-functional mafia (Ciconte, 2014). In this way the Platí 'ndrine cemented themselves as part of the *Cultural Aristocracy*, focusing on the more enterprise minded cultural traits of the 'Ndrangheta.

“But the point is that the *Capo Crimine* is a fictitious person and it is a fictitious person because the real power remains in the hands of the aristocracy of the Ndrangheta, which is the San Luca people and the Platí people, and that's about it (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022).”

This is in essence why the formal vertical structures, which law enforcement and the judiciary point to as being the integral constructs of structure in the organization, are not indicative of the real power

structures of 'Ndrangheta. When looking at other 'ndrine, what matters most is who they know from this aristocracy. The roles of specific 'ndrine changes over time, but the route to being an aristocratic 'Ndrangheta clan is always connected to who you know from the *cultural aristocracy*. The Platì 'ndrine also were one of the firsts to invest in the cocaine market, using their economic power to work together with other 'ndrine and organized crime groups like the Cosa Nostra from the United States and Sicily to organize the logistical side of the cocaine trafficking. While the San Luca 'ndrine were hesitant to get into the cocaine trafficking, they are now heavily embedded in the cocaine market. This is heavily influenced by the geographical location of origin as well, situated in the mountainous and underdeveloped Aspromonte region there was no real ability for law enforcement to interfere and no real ability to make significant funds in their home region. For this they stepped into new ventures like drug trafficking (Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016a). While the two towns of San Luca and Platì are the locations where the real 'Ndrangheta royalty come from, there are 'ndrine that can be counted to the rest of the aristocracy or 'class A 'ndrine' because of these new ventures.

4.3.3 The Sidernesì, the 'super 'ndrine' of the Ionian Coast

One of such names is the Commisso 'ndrina from Siderno. The Commisso 'ndrine are the descendants of very powerful and influential *Capibastone*¹⁷ from the past, Antonio Zzi 'Ntoni¹⁸ Macrì and Cosimo *u Quagghia*¹⁹ Commisso (de Boer, 2020; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009; Pájaro Rojo, 2017). Antonio Macrì was the undisputed boss of Siderno from the 1950's until his death in

Figure 4.7: Antonio Zzi 'Ntoni Macrì

1975. John Dickie tells of a story in which a judge described him as 'the living symbol of organized crime's omnipotence and invincibility' (Deep Dive: Exploring Organized Crime, 2022c, 3:30-4:43). After his death his right hand Cosimo Commisso took the reins from Antonio Macrì and the name of the 'ndrina changed to the Commisso 'ndrina. The Commisso is the *super 'ndrina* of Siderno, the most powerful clan of the city. Which says a lot because Siderno is a city so filled with 'Ndrangheta clans, that there are multiple locali in Siderno (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022). Siderno is the only city in



Source (Pájaro Rojo, 2017)

Calabria that has multiple locali. The *Sidernesì* started as foot soldiers for the Platì 'ndrine, doing the logistical work in the kidnappings and then the trafficking of illegal cigarettes, heroin and cocaine. This is because the *Sidernesì* are with many, and they have migrated to Northern-America, Southern-

¹⁷ Plural of Capo is Capi

¹⁸ Uncle Tony

¹⁹ The Quail

America and parts of Europe (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022). The Canadian branch of Italian organized crime, which is the biggest and most influential organized crime group in Canada, is called *the Siderno group* because they are a branch of the *Commisso 'ndrina* (Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016b, 2016c, 2016a). Like Sergi said:

“They got everywhere. Honestly, they are... the *Commisso's* are a powerhouse. Yeah, they are. I mean, they have bases in the Ivory Coast, they have bases in Venezuela and with bases I mean a representative and not the whole thing. But that's because they've always been hands on because they started being hands on for the *Plati* people, they were the drug traffickers for the *Plati* people who stayed at home scratching their back. Yes. In the eighties, nineties. So they remained and then they grew stronger and richer, obviously. So now they can also lend to others their skills. And they are again, they are many. I keep saying this, but I mean, honestly, the *Commisso's* are many (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022).”

The *Commisso's* worked with the *Plati 'ndrine* as their logistical foot soldiers, but after some time they ascended this role and started to work for themselves. The *Commisso 'ndrina* are in a sense the prime example of what *Arlacchi* would have seen as the complete evolution of the mafia from *traditional* rural governance-type organized crime into transnational *entrepreneurial mafia* (Phillips, 2017). In *Siderno* they focus on governance but their real power is their international presence and using that to organize transnational cocaine and heroin trafficking.

4.4 'Ndrangheta, the strength of a brand

The *cultural aristocracy* of some 'ndrine over others has not only been part of the internal power structures of the organization and a way to connect to the 'Ndrangheta brand, but also been the starting point of a process of *'ndranghetaisation*. The use of the name 'Ndrangheta by criminal actors from the region of Calabria brings certain expectations that can be exploited, thus making it admirable to introduce yourself as part of this consortium (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c). This happened within Calabria as well, where criminal families asserted themselves with the help and recognition of the 'Ndrangheta aristocracy to rise up the ranks of the organization (E3, personal communication, April 4, 2022). This can happen in various ways, by the media that does not understand what 'Ndrangheta is, in Calabria when families get absorbed into the brand and with Calabrian criminals wanting to use the brand name as a reputation booster:

“But yeah, it's the same thing that we are seeing now for the Rinascita-Scott²⁰ trial. That is a clear example of 'Ndranghetism and 'ndranghetisation, whereby you have clans that were not Ndrangheta in the classic sense. They are not in the province, they are not affiliated to the province, they are their own thing, but then all of a sudden become absorbed into this umbrella brand, which is convenient for everyone, because it's the winning brand and they have to adopt a number of behaviours to stay on that brand. All right. So we see that.”

[...]

“But abroad, this has an enormous weight because to say that everyone is from Calabria and that's organized crime is Ndrangheta. That's a massive leap. Yeah, massively. You might remember the case in Belgium with the Aquino brothers. For the love of God. They are not Ndrangheta. They just happen to be of Calabrian origin. They're drug traffickers (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022).”

This *brand name* is a factor in *delocalization* of 'Ndrangheta as well, which taps into the migration of the organization (Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c). As Sergi and Lavorgna point out:

“Rather than the expansion of the 'ndrangheta as organisation growing in power, we observe a '*ndranghetisation* process across Calabria and beyond regional boundaries (Sergi 2016a). This process occurs also with the increasing use of the single word “'ndrangheta” applied as a brand name to indicate the mafiatype behaviour—'*ndranghetism*—of criminals and groups with a Calabrian connection. By '*ndranghetisation* we essentially indicate the process of imitation and osmosis among the clans in Calabria and outside the regional boundaries that allow us to identify similar '*ndranghetist* behaviours even when there are no signs of formal coordination structures in place among the clans across different territories. Certainly, the clans across the region share similar behaviours and, in the years, have increased their power and reach in various criminal markets, sign that the brand name works and their reputation is reinforced (Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c, p. 5).”

'Ndrangheta is a '*segmentary society*' which bases its loyalty and behaviors in shared culture which has as function to uphold Durkheim's mechanical solidarity (Paoli, 2004, 2008; Sergi, 2018). *Segmentary societies* are societies that are held up because of shared values, lineage and are mostly used to define tribal societies (Durkheim, 2010). 'Ndrangheta uses this to impose a status contract upon their members, amply calling the initiation a 'baptism' (de Boer, 2020; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009; Paoli, 2008; Sergi, 2020a). The use of the *invention of tradition* as an invented benchmark of relevancy, like in so many nationalistic states of the 19th century, was a modus operandi they learned from the Freemasons that they collaborated with in this period of time (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). This is one example of how 'Ndrangheta as an organization is not rooted in enterprise-like bureaucracies like the American

²⁰ New Maxi Trial that is focused on the Mancuso 'ndrina from Vibo Valentia.

Cosa Nostra is seen, but uses mechanical solidarity to root members in the idea that they are part of a tribe. This tribe is called the '*honored society*' and uses religious, historical and cultural aspects to base itself in history and set itself apart from the rest of the world (Ciconte, 2014; de Boer, 2020; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009; Sergi, 2018; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c). Thereby also connecting back to the question whether money or power is the most important function of the 'Ndrangheta (Phillips, 2017), both are important as 'societies' cannot function tending to one goal. This is the way that mafias set themselves apart from other forms of organized crime within their inner cultural *status contract*, Paoli calls this the multifunctionality of mafias as organizations (Paoli, 2008, 2020; Reuter & Paoli, 2020). I want to add to that the opinion that this is socially constructed by way of seeing the organization as a (segmentary) society, having tribal and even religious mirroring of other segmentary societies. What sets 'Ndrangheta apart from segmentary societies like the Sicilian Cosa Nostra is the fact that the real family lineage rooted in real blood ties are very prevalent in 'Ndrangheta, therefore the family dynasty theory of Sergi being one of the clearest examples of analyzing the base level mechanical solidarity and ways of connecting '*ndranghetism* as a culturally transmissible trait in members (CICC, 2017; Sergi, 2020a; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c).

"So I think the, the challenge of the Ndrangheta is not to or the advice I can give to anyone who's trying to study it. Just take it as it is. Don't try and put more structure on it because they don't have it. I mean, they do have the connection. Of course, it's the same place, it's the same region. And they don't want to step on each other's toes, but they don't need that kind of structure (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022)."

This being the case, there are formal power structures like the *locali*, *Mandamenti* and the *Crimine* that are used as constructs to prevent violence. However these constructs do not function as controlling organs of the society, the power resides within the culture and the 'ndrine that are the aristocratic forces within that culture. This makes it far more difficult to investigate and research the 'Ndrangheta as it is not a unitary organization, but as a criminologist it is important to look past the barriers of law enforcement.

4.5 Concluding Remarks

The 'Ndrangheta is a mafia-type organization that was founded in Calabria during the time of the *Risorgimento*. Because of the historical and geographical origins of the organization the 'Ndrangheta is not a top-down enterprise like structure, like the Cosa Nostra is typified as. There is internal collaboration when it comes to the entrepreneurial dimension of the 'Ndrangheta with the use of *consorzi*, but the power structures within these *consorzi* are mostly based on the power of the culture and history of the 'Ndrangheta and respective 'ndrine within these *consorzi*. The problem that arises is the typification of the 'Ndrangheta and the manner of communicating this typification to the general

public. Understanding the 'Ndrangheta is at the center of every research regarding the 'Ndrangheta. Misunderstanding the 'Ndrangheta is at the core of why comparisons with the legal capitalistic world are used by research institutes and therefore public media. When the 'Ndrangheta seems to be such an abstract phenomenon that it has to be compared to known phenomena, misunderstandings about the organization run rampant. I do not believe that the comparisons to McDonald's and Al-Qaida are conducive to the better understanding of the 'Ndrangheta for the general public. This is why I have focused a complete chapter on the history, structure and culture of the 'Ndrangheta. It is at the core of the thesis. We can be critical of the limitations of law enforcement and the following judicial constructs that come from this, and we should be when researching mafia type organizations like 'Ndrangheta if we aim to do real academic work on these organizations.

Chapter 5. ‘Ndrangheta, Worldwide Steppers

*“You should move to a small town, where the rule of law still exists.
You will not survive here. You are not a wolf, and this is the land of wolves now.”*

(Villeneuve, 2015)

In the preceding chapter, I explained the ‘Ndrangheta as I see it: a multi-functional mafia rooted in culture as a way to ensure mechanical solidarity between autonomous ‘ndrine. Chapter 4 focused on the ‘Ndrangheta in Calabria, as Calabria is the mainland, the home and the spiritual mother of the ‘Ndrangheta. In chapter 4 I did not focus on the main activity of ‘Ndrangheta as it is highly dependent on specific ‘ndrine. While in Calabria the primary activity is still governance. Seeing as this thesis focuses on cocaine trafficking and the role of the ‘Ndrangheta in the Dutch cocaine market, there has to be some form of migration and diversification of activities for the organization to become embedded in transnational cocaine trafficking. Categorizing the types of migration by focusing on *transplantation*, *functional diversification*, and forms of *delocalization* and *‘ndranghetisation*.

To bridge the step from the local governing mafia in Calabria to a transnational organization embedded in the cocaine trade, I will look at the necessary forms of ‘Ndrangheta migration by answering the second sub-question of RQ1:

How did ‘Ndrangheta evolve into an international organization that has links in multiple parts of the world linked to cocaine trafficking?

I will do this by looking at the four most important regions that the ‘Ndrangheta migrated to concerning the Dutch cocaine market: Northern Italy (specifically Lombardy and Milan), Canada (Greater Toronto region), Belgium and Western Germany. This is because of the chronological order of the major migration waves that Calabrians and therefore ‘Ndrangheta used and the direct importance of these regions, starting with the least directly important region and ending with the most important regions for the Dutch cocaine market.

In my analysis I will use my view on the migration of the ‘Ndrangheta into these regions and reflect with that on the frame used by Italian law enforcement and the institutions that follow this view. One of the most poignant examples of this frame is the view of colonization, which is also used by Europol:

“‘Colonisation’ is a term frequently used to illustrate the expansion of the ‘Ndrangheta outside its native region of Calabria. It is a brilliant definition, as it clearly marks the difference with other Mafia-type criminal groups. In fact, as outlined above, Cosa Nostra and other Sicilian groups do not try to replicate their basic structures away from Sicily, but they tend to send emissaries. Not so the ‘Ndrangheta, which implants perfect copies of its essential structures in territories not under its control, pursuing a long-term strategy of progressive infiltration in new economic and social environments. The basis of the power of the ‘Ndrangheta outside its territory is its enormous financial might, the immense corruptive power thereof and its impact on the legitimate economic and financial environments. The ‘Ndrangheta started building its economic power in the 1970s and 1980s with the ransoms deriving from several kidnappings they perpetrated, mainly in Northern Italy. That extorted money was then invested in drug trafficking, a trans-national business where over the years it reached a leading position. Drug trafficking is still the main source of profits for the ‘Ndrangheta, together with the constant diversion of public funds through fraud and rigged tenders (Europol, 2021, p. 11).”

This view on the migration of the ‘Ndrangheta is based on true differences with the Cosa Nostra, but Europol frames the migration of the ‘Ndrangheta in a way that eludes to this unitary enterprise structure that operates in a purely rational way. This is not how I see the ‘Ndrangheta, its migration and their *modus operandi*. This frame is also frequently used in combination with the stating of revenues and therefore propelling the idea of some ominous illegal holding that colonizes the world and makes absurd amounts of money doing so, like seen in discourse from Italian moral entrepreneurs.

5.1 ‘Ndrangheta’s new home region

The first region that the ‘Ndrangheta migrated to was Italy’s Northern provinces. This happened from the early times after the Italian Unification onwards. There are multiple reasons given to the reasons ‘Ndranghetisti migrated to the Northern provinces. I will discuss which reasons for migration are stated and after this, I will discuss the manner of mafia migration visible in Northern Italy and the implications of this migration for the whole of the ‘Ndrangheta.

Two major factors are used to explain the migration of ‘Ndrangheta to Northern Italy mainly to the provinces of Lombardy, Liguria and Piemonte. The first factor is the Calabrian Diaspora, here defined as the mass migration of Calabrians to regions outside of Calabria which does not necessarily mean outside of Italy. The recorded amount of Calabrians outside of Calabria was 430.383 in 2021 (*Fondazione Migrantes, 2021*). The second being the Italian penal policy referred to as *soggiorno obbligato* or *confino*: this was the forced resettlement of convicted criminals/mafiosi to other parts of Italy, which stopped in 1995 (Ciconte, 2014; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009). With the thought of creating distance between the criminal and their respective network, in hopes of taking that criminal out of their criminal paths. This did not work. Contrary to this hope, it was used by ‘Ndrangheta members to

realize new networks in these new regions (Morselli *et al.*, 2011; Varese, 2011). While this is sometimes stated as an important reason for the migration of ‘Ndrangheta to the northern provinces of Italy, it is not that clear cut. As Varese stated:

“So forced resettlement of Mafiosi to the north of Italy, so stupid as it might be as a policy, it doesn't necessarily produce mafias everywhere in the North, only where there is a demand for it, but obviously makes it easier because then the Mafioso is there. But the mafias, without anybody else, I think, finds it very hard to set up a mafia (E7, personal communication, May 24, 2022).”

This is reinforced by other scholars, as there needs to be a fertile ground for mafias to have a function in the region migrated to (Allum, 2014; Calderoni *et al.*, 2016a; InSight Crime, 2021c; Morselli *et al.*, 2011; Paoli, 2008; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016b). This fertile ground is mostly defined with the other factor of ‘Ndrangheta migration to Northern Italy: the Calabrian Diaspora. The Calabrians that emigrated from their home province were the fertile ground, for what Varese calls the *demand for criminal governance* (Varese, 2006, 2011, 2014, 2020). Meaning the: *intimidating power of the association and of the resulting conditions of submission and silence to commit criminal offences, to manage or at all events control, either directly or indirectly, from mafia organizations* (Association of Mafia-Type, 1975). However, it is too simple to see a movement of a Calabrian community and link it to ‘Ndrangheta presence. Like the *Direzione Nazionale Antimafia* stated: *There is “no automatic link” between the presence of “migrants arriving from areas with a strong mafia presence and criminal settlements”* (DNA, 2012, p. 109). Calabria is and has always been a very poor region in the contemporary Italian history, while the north of Italy was experiencing an industrial boom after World War 2 (Dagnes *et al.*, 2020; Riall, 1994; Sciarrone, 2019). This meant that there were many jobs for the Calabrian peasants that moved to the north (de Boer, 2020). Notwithstanding the ‘Ndranghetisti that were forced to relocate to the north by way of the *soggiorno obbligato*, there were also ‘Ndranghetisti that migrated alongside these emigration waves to the north from the 1950's onward. This was not always strategically planned, but mostly just happened along the way (Calderoni *et al.*, 2016a; E7, personal communication, May 24, 2022; Sciarrone & Storti, 2014; Varese, 2011). So combining the small amounts of ‘Ndranghetisti that migrated to Northern Italy because of *soggiorno obbligato* and the ‘Ndranghetisti that migrated with the migration waves of Calabrians to the north, the fertile ground of emigrated Calabrians proved vital in the migration of ‘Ndrangheta. This *demand for criminal governance* was mostly filled by the Cosa Nostra up to the 1990's, when the Cosa Nostra lost the all-out war with the Italian state. This meant that the ‘Ndrangheta clans that were up to then working under the governance of the Cosa Nostra rose from Cosa Nostra's shadow and instituted themselves as the governing body (Paoli, 2014; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c).

5.1.1 Money grows on Lombardian trees

But what form does the migration to Northern Italy by the 'Ndrangheta take? I will specifically focus on Lombardy to see this. There have been more attempts of transplantation or even migration by the 'Ndrangheta to northern provinces of Italy, but because of differences in the *demand for criminal governance* some attempts were more successful than others. For example the attempt in Verona (Veneto) was less successful (Varese, 2006). I will focus on Lombardy and the Lombardian capital of Milan because it is the most important and most successful example. When looking at the main activity that 'Ndrangheta operates in Northern Italy, they mostly focus on *criminal governance*, but do diversify their activities like in Calabria. This comes from the fertile ground of Calabrians that in a sense there was a demand for criminal governance that was not fulfilled by local groups.

“So yeah. They come from Calabria. So the so basically there is generalized migration of Calabrese everywhere in the world. Then within that generalized migration you can also have mafiosi because of in Calabria there are some or many even. And so they end up in the new locality, just because they end up there. Not that. Not that there is any particular reason and then in some of these places which have got very special conditions, there is a demand for governance. And then these people, if they are smart, they can pick up this demand and offer the supply and governance. Maybe many times they don't, and many times there is no demand. So this would be a transplantation of the Ndrangheta. But of course in that locality abroad it could be that other groups govern instead of those transplanted. So those who are local obviously don't need migration. Those who are not local and come from outside. Yes, usually you need some degree of migration because to do governance of territories without a group that is large enough in a community, I think it's very hard. I mean, in theory it's possible, but I think you never really see that (E7, personal communication, May 24, 2022).”

In this sense Varese says that for transplantation there needs to be a community of Calabrians that have migrated to a region, which has happened in Northern Italy (Franceschi, 2018; Sciarrone & Storti, 2014). The specific special conditions for the activity of criminal governance are not met in every region of Northern Italy, but they are met in the regions of Lombardy, Liguria and Piemonte while there are regional differences. This can be seen by looking at the structure of 'Ndrangheta in these regions. Looking specifically at Milan, the capital of Lombardy, there are multiple locali located within the municipality of the city (Franceschi, 2018). This structure eludes to the focus on governance as the main activity of 'Ndrangheta in Lombardy and with that the confirmation that transplantation has occurred (Varese, 2020). There are multiple locali and therefore 'ndrine operating in the region. Although not officially called a *Mandamento*, there is a real comparison to be made to the collection of locali in Lombardy. The region has an overarching structure called the *Lombardia*, in tune with a *Mandamento* (Saviano, 2016; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c). While it is in tune with a *Mandamento* like in Calabria, the name for external boards of command is a *Camera di Controllo*. A *Camera di Controllo* is

in a sense a *Crimine* for the region it is based in, but is a subordinate to the *Calabrian Crimine*. This also comes from the real historical longevity of the 'Ndrangheta in the Lombardy region, seen in the way Sanne de Boer responded to me calling it an external region:

J.B.S.: "I understand, but I have noted here structure abroad and abroad I take then very broadly, so also Northern Italy."

E3: "That is how you can see it. You are right in indeed it is not the original territories."

J.B.S.: "Yes exactly, that's what I meant, thank you."

E3: "But you can also see that as: how long is not original? Because they have been there since the 50/60s...." (E3, personal communication, April 4, 2022)."

This historical longevity is linked to the strong presence of the locali in Milan and the rest of Lombardy. With *Operation Crimine Infinito*²¹ it was proven that the Milan locali were part of the same organization of the Calabrian 'ndrine (Franceschi, 2018). While there were autonomous 'ndrine that operated in Lombardy, Liguria and Piemonte, the *Cultural Aristocracy* of the 'Ndrangheta was the dominant force of these 'ndrine like they operated in Calabria. The 'ndrine in Lombardy were extensions of Calabrian 'ndrine that had transplanted their structure in the new regions. There are nine locali in Milan, this only suggests the amount of 'ndrine and 'ndranghetisti that are active in the Milan metropolis (Franceschi, 2018). These 'ndrine are transplantations from numerous Calabrian 'ndrine and the amount makes it unimportant to look at which 'ndrine are active in the region as it can be said that every 'ndrina has a stake in the region. Milan and Lombardy are the financial heart of 'Ndrangheta as they are the financial heart of the Italian state. However, like normal Lombardian citizens are governed from Rome, 'Ndrangheta's offshoots are still governed from Calabria (Dickie, 2013; Paoli, 2008; Sciarrone, 2014).

5.1.2 Reaching for the stars

The dominance of Calabria over the Northern 'ndrine became most clear with the separation attempt of Carmelo Novella. Carmelo Novella was the *Capo Società* of the *Lombardia* in 2007 and Novella wanted to separate the *Lombardia* from the *Calabrian Crimine* and the old 'ndrine. He introduced new ranks that 'Ndranghetisti could acquire and wanted to break from the traditional and cultural ways that he deemed old fashioned (de Boer, 2020; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009; Saviano, 2016). For this separation attempt he was assassinated on the 14th of July 2008:

²¹ *Operation Crimine* was an operation that lasted multiple years and was divided in multiple different operations that were combined into one. *Operation Crimine Infinito* focused on the vertical power structures in different provinces than Calabria and how they related to the Calabrian *Crimine*.

“That was Novella. Um, yeah, that's just someone who wanted more power, because if you look at those figures who are calling the shots in San Luca, they're really not really charismatic types. And if you have a macho, as Novella apparently was. He just thought: yeah fuck it people, we're in Milan we have a modern world here, they [are] in Calabria. We're just going to follow our own rules here. And he probably wanted to be creative with new and adding new ranks and stuff. That kind of thing, no, that wasn't appreciated. Let me put it this way: in San Luca, for example, they're very much about formalities. Probably today that might have also evolved into something modern. But from what we know, that's the way it is. In any case, they probably look for figures there who like to propagate that kind of thing and of course if you've been calling the shots in Milan since you were born or a little later, then you may think it's smarter to do things a little differently so that you don't need those lines to Calabria (E3, personal communication, April 4, 2022).”

This assassination proves two things about the ‘Ndrangheta in Lombardy: first the *Lombardia* was strong enough to believe that there was a chance that separation could be completed and second that the power of the Calabrian ‘ndrine and the way that the old culture is to be respected:

“Intercepted in his car on the way to the funeral, a boss tells the mother: 'He wanted to reach for the stars, but you can't touch the stars.' Her reply: 'You reap what you sow.' As if it were perfectly normal: you did wrong, you're punished for it (Saviano, 2016, p. 249) .”

The old rules from Calabria are the only ones that matter, even in 2007.

5.1.3 The importance of Lombardia

Lombardy and Milan are important for the whole of the ‘Ndrangheta because they represent the biggest and most important base that the ‘Ndrangheta has outside of Calabria. There have been more attempts of ‘Ndrangheta transplantation in Northern Italy, some more successful than others, but none more impactful than Lombardy. In Lombardy

there are ‘ndrine that are the dominant force in criminal governance over markets: criminal markets like drug markets but also legal commercial markets (Dagnes *et al.*, 2020; Paoli, 1995; Sergi, 2019). Besides that, as with the whole of the ‘Ndrangheta, there are ‘ndrine that operate as foot soldiers and are more involved in the business of these illegal markets (E8,

personal communication, May 26, 2022). Milan as the financial heart of Italy is one of the most important cocaine markets of Italy and some of the Lombardian ‘ndrine are involved in the trafficking of cocaine to and within the municipality while other more important ‘ndrine govern these markets.

Figure 5.1: Categories and numbers of mafia related crimes in Milan

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Mafia homicides	1	0	0	0	0	0
Threats	4813	4171	4009	4090	4239	4303
Extortion	359	363	359	409	500	500
Usury	22	21	28	23	31	11
Exploitation of prostitution	79	95	71	51	54	58

Source (Franceschi, 2018, p. 21)

The Calabrian 'ndrine remain the dominant force of the Lombardian 'ndrine that transplanted to the region. The northern provinces of Italy were the first places 'Ndrangheta migrated to and transplanted in and still are the most important provinces outside of Calabria for the whole of the organization. What is interesting in the transplantation of 'Ndrangheta in Lombardy, is that the rates of 'Ndrangheta assassinations are extremely low in the region. Something that is seen in most external regions the 'Ndrangheta migrates to. Varese sees this in line with the governance of mafias over criminal networks, making sure that violence does not obstruct business that they control (E7, personal communication, May 24, 2022; Varese, 2014, 2020).

The migration to the financial heart of Italy meant opportunities for the 'ndrine to infiltrate companies as well as governing illegal markets. Some of these examples are the infiltration of *TNT Express* and the attempted infiltration into the *World Expo* in Milan (Dagnes *et al.*, 2020; de Boer, 2020; DNA, 2016, 2020; European Commission, 2021). Sometimes the infiltration in legal businesses went hand in hand with the pursuit of illegal markets. The most enlightening example of this is the infiltration of the *Ortomercato*, the largest fruit market of Milan. It was found that the 'ndrine had infiltrated the fruit market and used it to traffic drugs and other illegal goods, but also used it to extort and control the fruit market in Milan (DNA, 2012; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2010). The fact that the 'ndrine in Milan were a subordinate transplantation that was controlled from Calabria which was involved in drug trafficking and the infiltration of legal businesses, resulted in the comparisons to the Milan transplantation being an establishment of the *Calabrian company 'Ndrangheta* (Demoskopika, 2014; *France-Presse*, 2014; *Il Quotidiano del Sud*, 2019; NRC, 2009a; Quote, 2010). The transplantation in Milan has also been framed differently: *Milan, Italy's business capital, has also become the 'Ndrangheta's new capital* (Struggles in Italy, 2012). The presence of the 'Ndrangheta in white collar crime and the infiltration of legal companies in Milan meant that the comparisons to holdings and legal companies were even more apparent than before. With this came the measuring the revenue of the 'Ndrangheta and comparisons of this revenue to other companies and even different organized crime groups (*De Stentor/Gelders Dagblad*, 2008; Demoskopika, 2014; Eurispes, 2012; *France-Presse*, 2014). The face of the 'Ndrangheta became that of an international company that had its headquarters in Milan (*CaféBabel*, 2010; *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 2022; Struggles in Italy, 2012). The infiltration of the legal economy is one of the dominant reasons that the 'Ndrangheta is framed as a company, while the focus on cocaine trafficking as the main manner of earning money is seen in that light.

“'Ndrangheta's organization does not resemble that of other Italian mafias. Mirroring Latin American criminal organizations, it seems closer to a cartel, or a sort of federation of clans. Groups of families work together using a number of controlled firms across a fairly large geographical area, and showing a

large degree of military and financial autonomy. They follow a code of conduct (or “business ethics”) which derives from their shared roots: traditional values, respect and loyalty.

[...]

‘Ndrangheta is a criminal firm with the profits of a multinational company, more than half of which come from drug trafficking. In 2007-08, cocaine consumption in Milan increased by 27%. In 2010, it increased by 40%. Today, one in six people in Milan snort cocaine in the ceaseless market of addiction (Struggles in Italy, 2012).”

In this excerpt from a review of a book about the ‘Ndrangheta in Milan, the subtle and not so subtle comparisons to legal companies are visible. The shared culture of the ‘Ndrangheta is compared to business ethics and the ‘Ndrangheta is characterized as a criminal firm. It is also visible that once and again the difference with the other Italian mafias is stressed and therefore the comparisons arise. The basis of the book and the review of that book is based on the investigation *‘Ndrangheta Holding 2008* from Eurispes. Like in the investigations that were done by Italian law enforcement agencies like the DIA and the DNA, the measure of the ‘Ndrangheta is the revenue of the ‘Ndrangheta (DIA, 2017a, 2018a; DNA, 2012, 2014; *Il Quotidiano del Sud*, 2019). These revenues get compared with companies, states and other OCG’s like Mexican Cartels. The idea that this *holding* moved into Milan is often combined with the idea of infiltration and colonization, seen as steps of a ladder. First there is infiltration of this maleficent holding in other companies and then there is colonization of the region (Eurispes, 2012; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009; Struggles in Italy, 2012).

5.2 The Canadian Connection

The migration of ‘Ndrangheta to Canada is a very complex story which I will try to simplify to explain why the connection between Canada and Europe is important in the whole picture of transcontinental ‘Ndrangheta involvement in the cocaine market. While the specific ‘ndrine that were active in Lombardy were not a focal point in the explanation of migration in that region, with ‘Ndrangheta migration to Canada these specifics are important. I will focus on the *Canadian Crimine* and the *Siderno Group* as the main protagonists. *The Siderno Group* is one of the most prominent factions within the ‘Ndrangheta when it comes to international drug trafficking, as discussed in the previous chapter.

“As in Perth (Australia), the so-called Siderno Group is yet another slice of the ‘Ndrangheta. Mind you, it is still the ‘Ndrangheta, probably one of the most important ‘Ndrangheta(s); some of the most influential clans of the Calabrian mafia are around Siderno and respond to the Siderno ‘society’ (Sergi, 2022, p. 137).”

The Calabrian Diaspora has seen many Calabrians move to North-America, Canada is the country where the third most Calabrians have moved to (*Fondazione Migrantes*, 2021; Sergi, 2022; Sergi &

Lavorgna, 2016c). This meant that there is a solid base of Calabrian immigrants that the 'Ndrangheta could move with and exploit over the years. There was a *demand for criminal governance* because of the low socio-cultural standing of Calabrian immigrants in Canada, which the 'Ndrangheta filled (E7, personal communication, May 24, 2022; Varese, 2014, 2020). Whenever migration like the Calabrian Diaspora is concerned, people follow others from their respective region. This respective region can be Calabria as a whole, but is sometimes very visible on a smaller scale like with certain cities. Siderno and the surrounding region is the base which a lot of Canadian-Calabrians come from. This means that a lot of the 'ndranghetisti that operate in Canada are also from the Siderno region (Sergi, 2022; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016b).

5.2.1 The *Commisso's* in Canada

Like discussed in Chapter 4, the ruling *super 'ndrina* of Siderno is the *Commisso 'ndrina* which was once called the *Macri 'ndrina*. This 'ndrina was once led by one of the most prominent 'Ndrangheta figures of the twentieth century: Antonio 'Zzi 'Ntoni Macri also known as *the king of three worlds*. This nickname was given to him because of his great connections between Calabria, Sicily and Canada (Ciconte, 2014; de Boer, 2020; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009; Sergi, 2022). Antonio Macri saw that there were valuable opportunities in Canada which the *Sidernes* could use and he sent 'ndranghetisti to Canada. He sent Michele Racco to Canada to organize the 'ndranghetisti there and set up a chain of command in Canada. With this chain of command the *Siderno Group* was founded, the name was given by Canadian law enforcement because of the high representation of *Sidernes* in the group. *The Siderno Group* is in a way the international arm of the *Commisso 'ndrina*, a full transplantation of the *Sidernes* in Canada (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022; Sergi, 2022; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016b; Varese, 2020). *The Siderno Group* operates autonomously in Canada, but has tight connections with the *Commisso's* in Siderno as they in a sense belong to the same group. An 'Ndrangheta within the 'Ndrangheta (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022; Sergi, 2022; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016b).

This was not the only thing that was founded by Michele Racco, he also founded a *Camera di Controllo* in Canada, making it the first *Camera di Controllo* that was founded outside of Italy (de Boer, 2020; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009; Sergi, 2022). According to Canadian authorities there have been coordination structures since the 1950's, these were wanted by American mobster Albert Anastasia and Frank Costello (Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c, p. 63). There could be some form of cross-pollination with the American Cosa Nostra in the 1950's like with the Freemasons in the 19th century, where the 'Ndrangheta learned the use of vertical coordination structures. The most important difference with the *Camera di Controllo* in Northern-Italy, in Canada almost everyone is from Siderno (Sergi, 2022). This means that ultimately the *Commisso 'ndrina* is the basis of power (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022). Like explained in Chapter 4 with the *Cultural Aristocracy*, it is not the formal power

structures perse that persist in their power. With the 'Ndrangheta it is the name, cultural status and history that make up where the power reside. The *Commisso 'ndrina* is the royalty of Siderno and therefore are the royalty of Canada. The Canadian branch is autonomous, but it is connected through culture with Siderno. Everything that happens in Siderno affects Canada and the other way around (Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016b).

The investigation, in addition to unraveling the most current internal dynamics within the local Siderno, has given yet another confirmation of the operations of the families of the Ndrangheta families of the Ionian *Mandamento* in Canada, particularly in the area of Toronto, according to the rules proper to the Calabrian organization, with the establishment of a kind of control chamber, created to maintain abroad the balance between the various families, but today capable of making decisions that concern Calabria as well, the direct involvement of such a structure in relation to a murder committed in Siderno and being, the brother of the victim, interfaced with some members of it, in order to understand the reasons for the serious criminal act (DIA, 2020c, p. 35).

The *Sidernesì* were once the foot soldiers used by the Platì 'ndrine as logistical personnel in the kidnappings and when the Platì people started to dabble in drug trafficking.

"Some others (in this case the Platì people) relied on other families like the *Sidernesì*. That's why the *Sidernesì* went up because they are the ones who are able to go around the world. They really are around the world. They never left. They follow the cocaine. It's not they didn't wait for the cocaine. And by the way, the reason why they do this is because they've always done it. The *Commisso* family. And this is something that, again, it's one of those stories that it doesn't always come into focus in Canada and in the United States, were the one who helped Cosa Nostra in the shipment of heroin, the *Commisso*'s. So they've always been around the last bit of the distribution. So they know they have the know-how, they have the contacts, they have the reputation and they lend it to others (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022)."

This meant a rise in standing within the whole of the organization but for Canada the knowledge of this logistical process was more important. They lend this logistical know-how to the Platì people, the American Cosa Nostra, the Sicilian Cosa Nostra and local Canadian crime groups (E5, personal communication, May 3, 2022; Paoli, 2008). This made them more independent and thus served their rise in the whole of the 'Ndrangheta. Because of this rise in standing, the knowledge of the logistical process and their massive representation in Canada they could make the move to a higher echelon of 'Ndrangheta 'ndrine, becoming in a sense as powerful as the Platì and San Luca people: 'Ndrangheta Royalty:

“Take the *Sidernesì*. The Siderno groups are completely independent from anyone. Also because and I think it's something that gets often forgotten. The Ndrangheta does have some charismatic leaders. It never had the kind of power that the Cosa Nostra leaders had, but we do have [some leaders]. So when in some families you can recognize a charismatic leader in the past, then that family kind of lives off the heritage and the legacy of that person. In the *Sidernesì* you have *Commisso*, the *Commisso* family, which is by far one of the richest, one of the most important living of the heritage and the legacy of *Giuseppe Commisso*. And they kind of are their own thing. They don't have to ask for permission. They are royalty. Meaning that unless something really wrong is happening, they go undisturbed without talking to *Domenico Oppedisano*²², to all the other supposedly apical figures. They don't. They don't. No one in Siderno, knew *Domenico Oppedisano*. And I can tell you for a fact, because I've talked to people who are close to the clan, these persons [say]: ‘Who the fuck is this?’ Yes, in theory, if something happens, you will go to someone who knows someone who would get to talk to them. But it's not some person that everyone knows of. No, he's not the boss of Cosa Nostra. It's some random guy that at this stage we can consult with if something goes wrong. But it doesn't happen at the clan level. It may happen at the apical level. So the *Sidernesì* are different. They handle the drugs. Yeah. And they do so because they are many (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022).”

And they are not only many in Siderno, but also in Canada. In Canada as in Lombardy and Calabria, the primary function of the ‘Ndrangheta was governance over the Calabrians and illegal markets in the region (Dickie, 2011; Paoli, 2014, 2014; Varese, 2014). However the close proximity to the United States and particularly New York meant close proximity to the American Cosa Nostra. This proximity meant cooperation and reciprocal influence between the two groups. Together with the Cosa Nostra a more entrepreneurial oriented cooperation came up in the form of transnational trafficking, being initiated from Calabria by the *Platì* ‘ndrine. The *Platì* people used the *Sidernesì*, because of their great numbers, as the logistical men while the *Platì* ‘ndrine financed endeavors (Paoli, 2008, 2020; Sergi, 2022; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016a, 2016b). One man was instrumental in the organization of transnational drug trafficking for the ‘Ndrangheta and Cosa Nostra in the 1960’s and 1970’s: Roberto Pannunzi also known as *Bebè*²³ (di Franco, 2020; Sergi, 2022).

5.2.2 Canada’s cocaine bridge to royalty

Roberto Pannunzi is one of the biggest drug brokers that worked with the ‘Ndrangheta. However he did not only work for the ‘Ndrangheta but also for the Cosa Nostra. Pannunzi is a Calabrian born in Rome that had very strong ties to Antonio Macrì, being a pupil of Macrì. Pannunzi organized heroin trafficking for the Cosa Nostra and the ‘Ndrangheta during the 1960’s from between North-America,

²² *Domenico Oppedisano* was the Capo Crimine of the ‘Ndrangheta according to Operation Crimine. Domenico Oppedisano is from Rosarno on the Tyrrhenian Coast.

²³ The Baby

Palermo and Turkey (di Franco, 2020; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c). He was one of the first to see that cocaine was the drug to invest in and used the financial backing of the *Commisso's* and the *Plati 'ndrine* like the *Marando-Trimboli* and *Moribato-Trimboli* to buy cocaine directly in Colombia (de Boer, 2020; InSight Crime, 2021c; Sergi, 2019). This will be further discussed in the next chapter. This is important for the *Siderno Group* because this connection to Pannunzi in Canada helped their own financial standing and therefore the power the *Siderno Group* and the *Commisso's* had. The *Commisso's* used the logistical knowledge, connections with the *Plati 'ndrine* and their connections in Canada to organize large scale cocaine trafficking (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022). Pannunzi was the key in this, but the *Commisso's* used these elements to elevate themselves within the cultural hierarchy of the 'Ndrangheta and strengthened their position by using their transplantation to Canada as an important outpost for cocaine trafficking. The *Commisso's* built a trafficking bridge across the Atlantic, using the routes that Pannunzi used for heroin smuggling and building further with Pannunzi as their main broker. The *Commisso's* started as the logistical personnel, but used their independence to not only handle the logistical side but also finance their own cocaine.

This means that the 'Ndrangheta in Canada embodies a multi-functionality and multi-dimensionality. Like in Calabria and Northern-Italy both the *traditional* and *entrepreneurial mafia* dimensions are found in Canada, while the *entrepreneurial mafia* dimension is the most important for the international cocaine trade. The fact that the 'ndrine transplanted their structure in Canada and that this structure is linked to Calabria is sometimes used to frame the 'Ndrangheta as this world-wide holding. There are real links between the *Siderno Group* and the *Commisso 'ndrina* and other 'ndrine. This does not mean that they are all part of the same organization which is only controlled by the *Crimine di Polsi*. This does in turn mean that the framing of the *transplantation* to Canada cannot be seen as a colonization of Canada. There are links, but there is no case of intentional migration because of a strategic choice from a board of directors in Calabria. There was intention from the side of the *Commisso 'ndrina* and Antonio Macrì, but this was based on the *demand for criminal governance* seen in the migration of Calabrians to Canada.

5.3 'Ndrangheta's migration to North-Western Europe

Within Europe the 'Ndrangheta is active in Spain, Portugal, France, multiple Eastern-European countries, the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium. For this part of the chapter I will focus on Belgium and Germany, as they are the most important European countries when looking at the Dutch cocaine market. First I will discuss Belgium, a country that not only is culturally very comparable with the Netherlands but also has tight links with the Dutch cocaine market. I will not focus on the port of Antwerp, which is a very important port for the trafficking of cocaine but I will discuss this in the chapter on the cocaine market. For this chapter I will focus specifically on the migration of the

'Ndrangheta to Belgium and how that has taken shape. After which I will discuss Germany, looking specifically at the migration to the West of Germany in regions like the Ruhr area. There is evidence that the 'Ndrangheta is active in the East of Germany and south of the Ruhr area, but these regions are not that important for the story of the Dutch cocaine market.

5.3.1 The Flemish Soprano's

For the Belgian public there is one name that is synonymous with organized crime based on family relations: the family Aquino. Known in Belgium by their nickname *the Flemish Soprano's* (Sauviller & Di Rosa, 2016). The case on the Aquino's and the biggest cocaine bust in Belgium are their best known facts. The family operates from Maasmechelen, which is positioned between Luik to the south and Dutch Brabant

Figure 5.2: The Aquino Brothers



Source (De Morgen, 24-10-2014)

to the north, in between Geleen and Genk (de Boer, 2020; Sauviller & Di Rosa, 2016; Sergi & Rizzuti, 2021). It is a position that is very strategic in the contemporary cocaine market of North-Western Europe, which will be discussed further in a later part of this thesis (InSight Crime, 2021b; OCCRP, 2021a). The family Aquino has been connected to and framed as members of 'Ndrangheta multiple times, but refute this in public media (*Het Belang van Limburg*, 2015; Sauviller & Di Rosa, 2016). There are real question marks to be put around this connection, which are central when answering the question of 'Ndrangheta migration to Belgium. Are the *Aquino's* prove of 'Ndrangheta transplantation to Belgium? If not, is there a case of 'Ndrangheta transplantation to Belgium or is there a case of *functional diversification* and *delocalization* that can be ascribed to Belgium? Are the Aquino's a product of *'Ndranghetisation* because of their Calabrian origin? The two Belgian journalists Raf Sauviller and Salvatore di Rosa state this in their book *Maffia*:

“Of course the *Aquinos* have a great deal, and perhaps everything, to do with the 'Ndrangheta. Not only are they active in a drug market which, according to renowned mafia specialists such as magistrate *Nicola Gratteri* and the former journalist, politician and chairman of the parliamentary anti-mafia committee *Francesco Forgione*, is almost totally dominated by the 'Ndrangheta in Europe, they have also built up a criminal structure based on the family structure of the 'ndrine, the mafia families of the 'Ndrangheta (Sauviller & Di Rosa, 2016, pp. 22–23).”

This in itself is no proof of 'Ndrangheta affiliation in the form of membership to the whole of the organization. There might be a connection between modus operandi and market in which the 'Ndrangheta operates. However the journalists write about a different connection as well:

“But the clearest evidence of a heavy connection to the 'Ndrangheta is the plain fact that the *Aquino's* simply collaborate with the 'Ndrangheta and have supplied very large quantities of drugs to the Calabrese mafia, specifically to an important 'ndrina in Australia, and that Silvio Aquino has been convicted of that as well (Sauviller & Di Rosa, 2016, p. 23).”

When interviewing Anna Sergi I asked her about the *Aquino's* and she responded with:

“For me it isn't that just because we are from Calabria or we are based in Calabria or you have connections with Calabria, your organized crime activity, meaning drugs or extortion or whatever is falls within the parameter. No, because that means and this is less obvious in Calabria, because obviously Calabria is dense with the Ndrangheta and you have at some point someone will knock at the door and say: 'what the fuck are you doing?' Right? I mean, you can't just do whatever you want. You have to obey the rules of the game here. But abroad, this has an enormous weight because to say that everyone is from Calabria and that's organized crime is 'Ndrangheta. That's a massive leap. Yeah, massively. You might remember the case in Belgium with the *Aquino* brothers. For the love of God. They are not 'Ndrangheta. They are just happens to be of Calabrian origin. They're drug traffickers. That's it. Which is bad enough as it is. But the fact is. It's just the idea of putting order into something that is clearly difficult to comprehend. But the fact that someone abroad is from Calabria or has Calabrian origin and is involved in organized crime, does not make him 'Ndrangheta (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022).”

While these statements do not contradict each other outright, there seems to be some tension in the perceptions. This tension, whether there is a mere connection or whether there is more than a connection, is in a sense where the answer lies to the question of migration typification.

Assuming that the *Aquino's* are not 'Ndrangheta, they did business with members of the 'ndrine. Silvio Aquino was convicted for a drugs deal that involved 4.5 tons of XTC pills and the *Barbaro 'ndrina* from Australia, a powerful family name from Platì (Sauviller & Di Rosa, 2016). One of the *Aquino's* contacts in Belgium was Gennaro Bartelomeo, a cocaine broker in Belgium that had contacts in the ports of Antwerp and Rotterdam and was responsible for the off-loading of drugs from the ports. Gennaro Bartelomeo confessed to being a member of the 'Ndrangheta, which does not necessarily makes this a fact, although public media in Belgium do see it as a fact (*De Standaard*, 2017; *Nieuwsblad BE*, 2017). Which 'ndrina he was a member of is not openly discussed. Another of the *Aquino's* contacts was Martino Trotta, who is presumably the one responsible for the assassination of *Silvio Aquino* in August of 2015 (*HLN*, 2022). Martino Trotta is being connected to the *Pelle-Vottari 'ndrina* from San Luca, one of the most known 'ndrine in the whole of the 'Ndrangheta, which will be discussed further when

discussing the migration to Germany (OCCRP, 2018a). Just like Trotta, members of the *Pelle-Vottari* named Sebastiano Signati and Salvatore Seggio were apprehended in Meise in Belgium. Signati was a 49 year old *latitante* that was hiding in Belgium after being convicted for 26 years of prison on cocaine trafficking charges. He resided in Belgium to continue his cocaine trafficking closer to the transit places of Antwerp and Rotterdam (*Het Belang van Limburg*, 2015; NOS, 2015). The focus of these individuals was thus mostly on cocaine trafficking and it is important to state that they are individuals, this is a strong difference to the forms of migration in Canada and Lombardy.

5.3.2 A (de)local business

Whether the Aquino's themselves are officially inducted in the 'Ndrangheta is disputed and would be in a sense an answer to the question of the scale in which the 'Ndrangheta has migrated to Belgium and transplanting the 'ndrina structure in Belgium. However, this question cannot be answered here. What can be ruled out is the primary activity of the suspected and convicted members of 'Ndrangheta, looking at all the names mentioned in the paragraph above, being *criminal governance*. This is confirmed in police reports summarized by Sergi and Rizzuti in their rapport on regional mafia expansions (Sergi & Rizzuti, 2021). While interviewing journalist Sanne de Boer, the member of the Dutch National Police and Professor of criminology Letizia Paoli, none of them saw that there was a *demand for criminal governance* in Belgium that these Belgian-Calabrian criminals and 'ndranghetisti acted on (E3, personal communication, April 4, 2022; E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022; E5, personal communication, May 3, 2022).

“Generally speaking, 'Ndrangheta groups are very active in Belgium, yet it is not clear the extent to which they are physically structured in units spread across the territory. According to the Belgian police, the 'ndrangheta presence functions only as a sort of antenna of the clans based in Italy, like facilitators or front men active across Belgian territory. However, the police do not exclude that some “locali” (more settled in the local territory) might have been established as well (Sergi & Rizzuti, 2021, p. 124).”

When categorizing the manner in which 'Ndrangheta migrated to Belgium there seems to be combination of *functional diversification* by 'ndranghetisti, focusing on cocaine trafficking, and *delocalization* by using local drug traffickers as brokers and logistical personnel (Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c; Varese, 2020). The media in Belgium are actors in what I believe to be a process of '*Ndranghetisation* of the Aquino's (Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016b; Sergi & Rizzuti, 2021). There is a possibility that the Aquino's would also brand themselves as 'Ndrangheta to establish themselves as an organization under the 'Ndrangheta umbrella. It can be concluded that there is a role for the *family dynasties* framework in explaining the way that the Aquino's may have tried to position themselves in the criminal world, creating a brand and longevity in the cocaine market (Sergi, 2020b). The problem with '*Ndranghetisation* of the Aquino's is the fact that they are then seen as part of the all-

encompassing organization. When seeing the 'Ndrangheta as that one enterprise that controls the cocaine market, the Aquino's fit perfectly in the image that the 'Ndrangheta colonized Belgium as well. The Aquino's did business with known 'Ndranghetisti and were involved in the cocaine market, but they were not part of an Italian enterprise that controls the cocaine market. One of the examples of the idea that the 'Ndrangheta had 'colonized' Belgium besides the Aquino's was a rumor. Some media outlets state that the 'Ndrangheta has bought an entire neighborhood in Brussels as a way to launder money, this has not been proven and I strongly feel that it is an great exaggeration (Business Insider, 2012; *De Morgen*, 2010). While there has been a large influx of Italian immigrants in Belgium, the percentage of Sicilians among these is greater than Calabrians (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022; E5, personal communication, May 3, 2022; *Fondazione Migrantes*, 2021). The *demand for criminal governance* that would be found in Belgium is therefore more used by the Cosa Nostra (Varese, 2014, 2020). The dimension that the 'Ndrangheta embodies in Belgium is therefore *entrepreneurial mafia*.

"I see: if I have to look at the picture in the Netherlands, we have almost no Cosa Nostra so we can actually leave them out. Our southern neighbors in Belgium do suffer more from that, but that also has to do with their old migration flows (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022)."

The fact that some of these local drug traffickers are of Calabrian descent, the *Aquino's*, has seemingly mostly helped the public opinion framing the whole of the organization as a structure of 'Ndrangheta (*De Limburger*, 2008; *De Standaard*, 2017; Sauviller & Di Rosa, 2016). Belgian Limburg is mostly a very strategic location positioned right in between two very important locations for the 'Ndrangheta in North-Western Europe: the ports of Antwerp and Rotterdam and the 'Ndrangheta transplantation in western Germany (Sergi & Rizzuti, 2021).

5.3.3 Germany, the West European Control Chamber

Germany is the biggest economy of Europe and West-Germany is topographically located in a very interesting location for Italian mafias with a close proximity to the ports of Antwerp, Rotterdam and Hamburg and Frankfurt Airport. Combined with large streams of Italian immigrants that flocked to the industrial regions of the country, it is understandable that the Italian mafias have migrated to Germany (*Fondazione Migrantes*, 2021). The 'Ndrangheta is the most represented of the Italian mafias in Germany:

“Geographically, ‘Ndrangheta clans are located in the Southern regions of Baden Württemberg and Bayern, in the Western Nordrhein-Westfalen, and in the central Hessen. In terms of relations to the ‘ndrine” back in Calabria, investigations have revealed connections mostly to the following clans: 1) *Romeo-Pelle-Vottari* and *Nirta-Strangio* from the *Aspromonte* village of San Luca (Reggio Calabria) and *Pesce-Bellocco* from *Rosarno* (near the port of Gioia Tauro), active mostly in Nordrhein-Westfalen, Bayern, Baden-Württemberg, and Hessen; 2) *Farao-Marincola* from *Cirò* (Crotone), mostly operating in Baden-Württemberg and Hessen. Operation Platinum DIA60, of early May 2021, uncovered a drug trafficking venture run by the *Giorgi* clan (aka “*Boviciani*”) from San Luca, active with their associates in Überlingen, on the Northern shore of Lake Constance/Bodensee in Baden-Württemberg near the border with Switzerland (Sergi & Rizzuti, 2021, p. 62).”

Most of the clans that are active in Germany thus are active in the west of the country, though there are clans active in the east and south-east of Germany. I will not focus on these regions as they do not play a significant role for the Dutch cocaine market. From this example it is evidenced that there are numerous clans active in Germany, but there are also rough estimations on specific numbers of *locali* and ‘*ndranghetisti*:

“According to the DIA, in Germany, ‘Ndrangheta clans have exported the criminal model typically applied in Calabria and replicated the same structures and dynamics, in terms of both geographical and relational dimensions. The German BKA and the Italian DIA agree in saying that there are currently between 18 and 20 territorial units or localised structures comprising more ‘ndrangheta clans (aka “ndrine”) active in Germany. These units maintain strict links to the clans in the Calabrian provinces where they are from. In light of a parliamentary inquiry requested by the German Green party in 2019, the German Ministry of Interior and Justice claims that between 800 and 1000 ‘ndrangheta members are currently operating in Germany (Sergi & Rizzuti, 2021, p. 59) (Bundesregierung, 2019).”

There are links to the Calabrian homeland of the ‘Ndrangheta, pointing at dominance from these provinces. However, are these links coming from *functional diversification* or from *transplantation* of ‘ndrine? When looking at the activities of the ‘ndrine in Germany there is a strong link to the activities and organizational structure in Calabria.

“Clans tend to reproduce behaviours and modus operandi typical of the territory of origin, mostly within the Italian-Calabrian communities in Germany. For example, these behaviours include: offer of protection; attempts to exercise some degree of territorial control, order or governance; use of violence, threats and intimidation; exploitation of kinship; relevance of their pre-acquired criminal reputation. For instance, ‘Ndrangheta clans exercise their power within the Italian community based in Germany by imposing the purchase of goods and services sold by mafia-affiliated food companies to Italian restaurants and other food companies (in Italy, this would qualify as a form of extortion) (Sergi & Rizzuti, 2021, p. 61).”

Like in Northern-Italy and Calabria, the 'ndrine in Germany are embedded into the local Italian immigrant communities (*Bundesregierung*, 2019; Paoli, 2014; Sergi & Rizzuti, 2021). The focus of the 'ndrine is governance and following this the structure that is found in Calabria, Lombardy and Canada. There is a diversification of activities like in Lombardy and Canada, but the main structure is transplanted from Calabria into Germany. The member of the Dutch National Police categorized this transplantation by relating it to the formation of clans in the border region of West-Germany:

“We have also always said, and we still do, that in the Netherlands we see no clan formation. We do see this in the border area in Germany (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022).”

Sanne de Boer stated that the transplantation in Germany has a very real *traditional mafia* element, focusing on the extortion of Calabrian-Germans:

“What German cases show is that, among German, say Italian-Germans, of course they have a certain basis for extorting people. And so there is the community actually small community, so that they, for example, sell people wine that is too expensive for a restaurant (E3, personal communication, April 4, 2022).”

There is not only clan formation and transplantation of 'ndrine in Germany, there is a higher organizational structure. Like in Lombardy and Canada there is a *Camera di Controllo* in Germany. The main focus of this *Camera di Controllo* is the organization of the *locali* in Germany like in the other *Camere*²⁴ *di Controllo* mentioned. The peculiar characteristic of the *Camera di Controllo* in Germany is that it can be seen as the permanent base which organizes and coordinates international *functional diversification* of members in Belgium and the Netherlands (E7, personal communication, May 24, 2022). This function became more and more important as the dominant entry points for cocaine for the 'ndrine shifted. This made the *Camera di Controllo* in West Germany important for the trafficking of cocaine as well:

“During this later phase, it evaluated the opportunities offered by the new context, its benefits and disadvantages. A good example of this are the 'Ndrangheta's settlements close to the Western borders: the decision to move its units there seemed to follow a precise strategy and logic. In fact, it appears that the German territory has been used as the entry point for cocaine arriving from Latin America and being distributed to Italy and the rest of Europe. Establishing logistical bases in these border regions could help the 'Ndrangheta to directly manage and monitor its drug routes (Bedetti & Dalponte, 2019, p. 58).”

Where *contrast*²⁵ see borders between countries like Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands 'ndranghetisti do not see those borders. The whole region of North-West Europe is in a sense one

²⁴ Plural of Camera

²⁵ People that are not inducted into the 'Ndrangheta

country/region to the 'Ndrangheta (E3, personal communication, April 4, 2022; E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022; E7, personal communication, May 24, 2022; E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022). This means that the region of the Ruhr area is seen as the central region that is found in the middle of this 'country'. This centrality is even more prominent when looking at the region where most Calabrians have migrated to, which are the industrial areas of West-Germany (CICC, 2017; *Fondazione Migrantes*, 2021; Sergi & Rizzuti, 2021). This makes it so that the region is not only topographically central but also has a central cultural role for the 'Ndrangheta in North-West Europe. In West-Germany is the central command center built by the 'Ndrangheta for these reasons, a *Camera di Controllo* (E3, personal communication, April 4, 2022). Which is not only the chamber of control for the German 'ndrine, but also the chamber of control for all activities in the surrounding region. The central position in the trafficking of cocaine and high density of Calabrians makes this the strategic point for all 'Ndrangheta clans that are involved in the region. However, like elsewhere with the 'Ndrangheta the aristocracy are the most important form of control over the region. In West-Germany there is a central point of migration for the 'ndrine of San Luca, this was made obviously clear with the event that changed the perception of the 'Ndrangheta: the *Strage di Duisburg*.

Figure 5.3: A map of origins of the 'Ndrangheta transplantations in Germany



Source (mafianeindanke e.V., 2018)

5.3.4 The Strage di Duisburg

On the night of the 15th of August, on *Ferragosto* or Assumption, around 2.30 in the morning six men walked out of restaurant Da Bruno's in Duisburg and got shot at by two men. More than sixty shots were fired and after this every one of the victims was shot in the head. None of the six

men survived the assassination (*De Telegraaf*, 2007; *Het Parool*, 2007; *NRC*, 2009b; *Reuters*, 2007; *Trouw*, 2007). This assassination became known in Italy as the *Strage di Duisburg*, which means the massacre of Duisburg. I will use this phrase to indicate this event, because I feel that the Italian name does not construct the image as much as designating it as a massacre. This has to do with a language barrier that non-Italian speakers will have and the fact that it is not my mother language. The restaurant at which this happened was inspected by the German police investigation and there was found that in a secret chamber behind the restaurant there was a meeting room. The restaurant had

not only functioned as a money laundromat, but also as a control chamber for the transplanted 'ndrina (AD, 2007; Europol, 2021; NRC, 2009c; Strill.it, 2007). The men that were assassinated were part of the *Pelle-Vottari 'ndrina* and one of the men amongst them was Marco Marmo. Marco was from the town of San Luca, just as the clan he was part of. Since 1991 the *Pelle-Vottari 'ndrina* were in war with the *Nirta-Strangio 'ndrina* that is also from San Luca (Ciconte, 2014; DW, 2009; La Spina, 2014; Reuters, 2007). Although the blood feud between the two clans had taken the lives of multiple men since 1991, this was the first time that an 'Ndrangheta conflict was fought in a different country than Italy. Marco Marmo was suspected of assassinating Maria Strangio on Christmas, while attempting to assassinate her husband Giovanni Nirta who was the *Capobastone* of the *Nirta-Strangio 'ndrina* at that time (de Boer, 2020; de Jong & Voskuil, 2017; Dickie, 2013; Sauviller & Di Rosa, 2016). This was uncharacteristic of the 'Ndrangheta, taking a spot in the public lights by assassinating in a different country. The question of why this could happen is in Anna Sergi's eyes answered by looking at the aristocratic level that the San Luca 'ndrine belong to:

“But the point is that the *Capo Crimine* is a fictitious person and it is a fictitious person because the real power remains in the hands of the aristocracy of the *Ndrangheta*, which is the San Luca people and the Platí people, and that's about it. And you recognize this in Duisburg, because for something like that to happen, for such a mistake to happen, only the family that doesn't need any approval can do it (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022).”

Two particular aspects of Sergi's answer are important here: first the aristocracy and their power in the 'Ndrangheta and second the framing of the massacre as a mistake. First the aristocracy of the San Luca 'ndrine, enabling them to forgo any formal structures and being completely autonomous in the way they fight out this feud. This feud had been going on for 16 years at the time of the *Strage di Duisburg* but there had been a ceasefire accomplished in the 1990's by the then *Capo Crimine* Antonio 'Ntoni Gambazza Pelle. Antonio Pelle, although he had the same family name as the victim 'ndrina *Pelle-Vottari*, was once the *Capolocale* of the San Luca *locali* and the *Pelle-Gambazza 'ndrina*, a different clan from San Luca. After the *Strage di Duisburg* happened Antonio Pelle, who was at this time old and semi-retired, posted a message in the *Gazzetta del Sud* newspaper to end the war without victors (de Boer, 2020; Reuters, 2007; Saviano, 2016). Only a highly respected *Capobastone* from San Luca itself could end the war that could only have escalated on an international scale because of the aristocracy in which it waged.

The second aspect is the framing of the *Strage di Duisburg* as a mistake. I agree with Sergi for the most part, but I have reservations on claiming that the *Strage* was just a mistake. While the 'Ndrangheta became a world known organization because of this public display of violence, in the underworld it also cemented their name.

“The fear scenario of a situation like Duisburg. That has always been a kind of trauma and, bizarrely, also a springboard for the 'Ndrangheta because you have both the international spotlight on them: someone like Gratteri could constantly refer to Duisburg. Who is also quite fond of big words. But at the same time, they also had a fearful prestige in the underworld, they were also able to claim prestige with that (E3, personal communication, April 4, 2022).”

“yeah, it was also a bit like they said: Don't mess with us, because we are pretty serious. In the end, they will benefit from that and I think they understand that very well. That strategy of occasionally banging your fist on the table (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022).”

This does not mean that the whole ordeal was a purely rational attempt of growing prestige in the underworld, like Letizia Paoli explains:

“So and moreover, such a feud is rather a sign of weakness, or at least a sign of the emotions were not under control because certainly not in the mafia interests to organize such a feud. Yeah. Only get, I mean you get so much attention of the law enforcement officers or really think that, I mean, driven by the emotions and, and desire to be revenge, I guess, in our family, but otherwise it totally, you know, it's not in their best interest to do so, huh” (E5, personal communication, May 3, 2022)?

The way that this weakness, as Paoli says, showed itself did have a positive side-effect for the 'Ndrangheta. While the 'Ndrangheta has been an important organized crime group and the most internationally active mafia since the Cosa Nostra in a sense lost the war with the Italian State, the *Strage di Duisburg* gave them notoriety in the criminal world as well. This helped the brand of the 'Ndrangheta. In the underworld a brand is a powerful thing, this can also be seen when for example Colombian drug traffickers profile themselves as part of the Cali Cartel while knowing no one from the organization or the setting up of Crip cliques in The Hague that have nothing to do with the American Crips.

The migration of the 'Ndrangheta to western Europe and the unveiling of their presence because of the *Strage di Duisburg* was a shock in Germany. This was not the case in the Netherlands:

"J.B.S.: I wanted to talk first about an important moment though: that is 2007 in Duisburg. Back then the whole Anti-Mafia team wasn't really a thing, but maybe you know something about it. What effect did that have internally.... say in the police, because in the media it's all clear. But what effect has it had that suddenly six men are shot in front of a restaurant?

E4: In the Netherlands? Nil.

J.B.S.: Okay. So not that important then...

E4: No, look, in the end that was quite a trigger for Germany to start organizing things. We still notice that now, because they started so earlier with their deepening their expertise and organization is also a little bit further (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022)."

This trigger made the German law enforcement and public much more invested in the investigations on the 'Ndrangheta and have up until now more knowledge. This could also be argued by looking at the difference in role of Germany in the European cocaine market.

5.4 Concluding remarks

Seeing 'Ndrangheta migration in the four regions I have discussed in this chapter, in the different forms that it takes, is essential in seeing the route that cocaine takes with the 'Ndrangheta. There are far more countries that have seen 'ndranghetisti migrate to them, more often than not these countries have seen individual members that function as brokers or independent brokers that cooperate with the 'Ndrangheta. There are countries where the 'Ndrangheta has been transplanted to in a more stable form like Australia, but these countries are less significant when looking at the case of the Dutch cocaine market. The regions that are discussed in this chapter have more significant roles and are thereby essential in discussing. Northern Italy is the financial heart of the 'ndrine and the most important selling point that the 'Ndrangheta governs in Europe, as with Germany. Canada is a country that sees significant 'Ndrangheta activity related to the 'ndrine that are also active in the Netherlands, by way of their strong international character. Germany and Belgium are closely related to the Dutch cocaine market as they are included in the same 'region' for the 'Ndrangheta. The reason why I have discussed the countries separately is the difference in weight that these countries have which is mostly seen by looking at the most prevalent type of mafia migration and the *Camera di Controllo* in Germany. From West Germany, the cocaine trafficking from the Netherlands is suspected to be coordinated. The next chapter will in turn look at the cocaine market and how evolutions in the European cocaine market have affected the 'Ndrangheta and the Dutch cocaine market.

Chapter 6. White shipments, sweet collaboration

"Lesson number one: Don't underestimate the other guy's greed!"

Lesson number two: Don't get high on your own supply."

(De Palma, 1983)

In Chapter 5 I explained the processes and migratory routes that the 'Ndrangheta used to become an international organized crime group. In this chapter I will discuss the evolution of the European drug market and the role of the 'Ndrangheta in the market.

This chapter aims to answer the third sub-question of RQ1:

What is the Modus Operandi and role of the 'Ndrangheta in the European Cocaine market and how has this changed between the 1980's and the early 2000's?

I will outline this in a more condensed version of the story because there are numerous researchers, journalists and criminologists like Thoumi, Zaitch, Insight Crime, the OCCRP, UNODC, EUROPOL and the EMCDDA that have done far more research on the matter and I find that I have little to add to the discussion with this thesis (EMCDDA, 2021, 2022; InSight Crime & CLALS, 2020; Kenney, 2007; OCCRP, 2020; Thoumi, 2002, 2012, 2014; Zaitch, 2002). What I will outline is more the version of the story that is directly linked to the 'Ndrangheta and how the 'ndrine became active in the cocaine market in Latin America and Europe. I will use the blueprint of *consorzi* to explain the basic organizational form that the 'Ndrangheta used, this blueprint can be used to look at different stages, roles of actors and locations within the cocaine trafficking chain of the 'ndrine. In this way I will try to explain the roles and modus operandi by looking at examples to visualize that. After this I will discuss important locations in Europe, like Gioia Tauro and the European retail markets. With this the ground work can be laid to see the role of the Dutch cocaine market as a transit market for the rest of Europe in which the 'Ndrangheta operates.

6.1 Roberto Pannunzi: The Copernicus of Cocaine?

From the 1970's onwards the 'Ndrangheta had used the money made with the kidnappings and other sources of funds like cigarettes smuggling to establish connections with the Sicilian and American Cosa Nostra (Sergi, 2022; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016b). The Cosa Nostra were mostly focused on the trafficking of heroin (Paoli, 2014). Some 'ndrine did join in this venture but they were not the primary force within the market. This made it so that the 'ndrine also had to resort to the, at the time, less lucrative trafficking of cocaine (Saviano, 2015, 2016; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016b). They did gain substantial trafficking experience from this:

“But the Italians’ experience in the heroin business offered them a major competitive advantage over other European mafias getting into the cocaine trade.” They exported heroin from Europe into the United States so they had a lot of experience and they had established distribution and importation chains,” said Mike Vigil, a former chief of international operations for the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). The more forward-thinking mafiosi understood that this experience and criminal infrastructure could be used to traffic the cocaine themselves (InSight Crime, 2021c).”

One of the protagonists in the heroin and cocaine venture was *Roberto Pannunzi*, he became the main broker between the Cosa Nostra, Colombian groups and the ‘Ndrangheta (Sergi, 2022; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016b). As explained in Chapter 5 he organized heroin smuggling between Turkey, Italy and the United States using the migration of the *Sidernesì* to Canada to remain in contact from multiple important locations along this route. The famous *Pizza Connection* was based upon cooperation with the New York Five Families of the American Cosa Nostra, who bought and sold the heroin in the United States that was imported through Canada with the help of the *Sidernesì* (Deep Dive: Exploring Organized Crime, 2022). He was one of the first to see the future in cocaine, Italian journalist *Roberto Saviano* named him *the Copernicus of Cocaine* because of this (Saviano, 2015). He used his connections with the *Commisso ‘ndrina* and by extension the Platì ‘ndrine like the *Marando-Trimboli* to buy cocaine in Colombia for the European market (Saviano, 2015; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016b, 2016a). He started by exchanging 25 kilos of cocaine for 1 kilo of heroin. Pannunzi worked for both the Cosa Nostra and the ‘Ndrangheta, but after the murder campaign of *Toto Riina* and subsequent crackdown by the authorities on Cosa Nostra, his collaboration with the ‘Ndrangheta became more and more dominant in the international cocaine market (di Franco, 2020; Global Initiative & InSight Crime, 2021). Roberto Pannunzi held strong connections in South-America and even married his son off to an affiliate of Pablo Escobar to strengthen the relation (di Franco, 2020; *La Repubblica*, 2013). Pannunzi was responsible for the logistical side of the trafficking, in which he used the *Sidernesì* as his logistical personnel, while the Platì ‘ndrine financed the operations (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022). The combination of the loss of reputation and power by Cosa Nostra and the growth of the European cocaine market gave ‘Ndrangheta space to use their significantly bolstered funds to carve out dominance in the European market in the 1980’s (InSight Crime, 2021c; OCCRP, 2021a, 2021b). At his height *Pannunzi* smuggled from 2 to 5 tons of cocaine per month to Europe (di Franco, 2020; InSight Crime, 2021c; OCCRP, 2020, 2021b; Saviano, 2015; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016a)²⁶. The ‘ndrine use a system of what they call *consorzi*²⁷: Cooperations within the organization in which separate ‘ndrine cooperated within the ‘Ndrangheta to connect with various Latin-American groups (di Franco, 2020).

²⁶ The numbers of tons vary heavily based on what sources are used. This range is the minimum and maximum seen within different sources.

²⁷ See Chapter 4

The first example of this was the *consorzio* of the *Plati 'ndrine* and the *Commisso 'ndrina* with *Pannunzi* as their broker (Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016b). This first *consorzio* became a sort of blueprint that the 'ndrine use to traffic cocaine up until today (di Franco, 2020). Roberto Pannunzi was the broker that established the connection between the Italian mafias, being the buyers of the cocaine, and the Colombian cocaine networks. Pannunzi

was a well-traveled man, born in Rome where he had a high fashion boutique called '*Il Papavero*²⁸' during his heroin smuggling days which was a meeting point and money laundering operation (*La Repubblica*, 2013; Saviano, 2015). He moved to Canada when he was young and became the pupil of Antonio Macri, as discussed in Chapter 5 (Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016b). In Toronto he became a partner of Sicilian mafioso Salvatore Miceli, who was known within Cosa Nostra as the Minister of Foreign

Affairs (*ADUC*, 2003; *La Repubblica*, 2019). Because of his connections with the Cosa Nostra, the *Commisso 'ndrina*, the *Plati 'ndrine* and Colombians he became a central figure in the whole of the Italian connection with Latin America. He travelled along the world to maintain these connections. He was arrested three times, twice in Colombia and once in Madrid (*ADUC*, 2003; InSight Crime, 2021c).

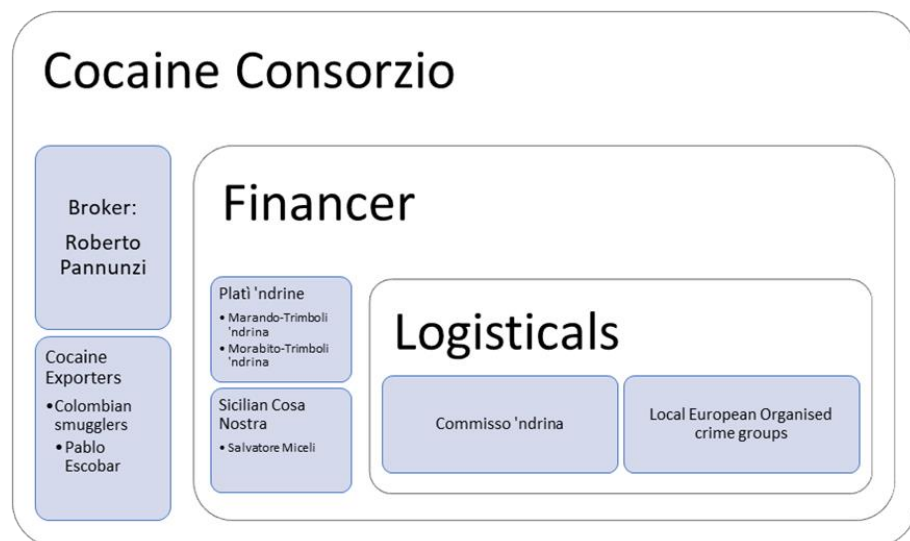
The Italian mafias had divided the roles so that the *Plati 'ndrine* like the *Marando-Trimboli* and the *Morabito-Trimboli* and the *Cosa Nostra*

Figure 6.1: Roles and Tasks in criminal cocaine networks

Roles	Tasks
Financier/buyer	Investment of capital in cocaine trafficking operations
Supplier	Supply of cocaine/organization of transportation and logistic
Drug broker	Intermediation between buyers and suppliers, that is, collection of quotes among financiers/ organization of transportation and logistics
Drug mule	Importation of cocaine into Italy (small quantities)
International transporter	Importation of cocaine into Italy (medium/large quantities), exportation of cocaine from Italy to other European countries
National transporter	Distribution of cocaine within Italy (wholesale level)
National wholesaler	Sale of cocaine across regional borders in Italy
Retailers	Distribution of cocaine at the local level (cities and towns)
Supporter	Cocaine storage/processing
Facilitator (for example, owner of import-export company/customs officer)	Support in risky points/activities of trafficking operations
Money collector	Collection of money at the wholesale and retail level
Money courier	Transportation of cash across European and/or international borders
Money broker	Transfers of money mainly using shell companies/ bank accounts

Source (Terenghi, 2020, p. 6)

Figure 6.2: Cocaine consorzio of Roberto Pannunzi in the 1980's



²⁸ *Il Papavero* is Italian for poppy plant, the poppy plant is used to make heroin.

were the groups that financed the shipments. The *Commissio 'ndrina* were at that time incapable to fund these shipments but did have the personnel and their presence in the necessary locations to handle the logistical side of the trafficking. In this process cooperating with local organized crime groups so that the cocaine would be extracted from the ports (di Franco, 2020; Global Initiative & InSight Crime, 2021).

Roberto Saviano and Italian magistrates like Nicola Gratteri and Francesco Forgione claim that Roberto Pannunzi invented the system of *consorzi* to organize high level cocaine wholesale import to Europe by brokering connections between Latin American organized crime groups to the 'Ndrangheta (Forgione, 2009; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009; *La Repubblica*, 2013; Saviano, 2015). While this could be very true, the impact of Roberto Pannunzi should not be overstated. He is the first known Italian broker that worked with the Cosa Nostra, 'Ndrangheta and Colombian smugglers in this system, but he is not the inventor of criminal cooperation. An example of this is the way that the Sicilian and American Cosa Nostra cooperated with Turkish groups to smuggle heroin to the United States, a system in which Pannunzi himself played a role. In Chapter 4 I explained that there were so-called *action groups* in the late 19th and early 20th century of multiple 'ndrine that cooperated in activities like cattle rustling (Paoli, 2014). There is always a need for specialty within cooperations and criminals have been cooperating since their inception, drug trafficking is just a different activity. This example of Jan Meeus is in a sense the most bare version of how criminal cooperation arises and therefore of what a *consorzio* is.

“So say, you are a Spanish criminal and you run into some Colombians and they say: if you can organize it we can do six thousand [kilos of cocaine] with you four times a year. "Can I finance that? No I can't finance that. And then how do I get it into Europe? Do I know anyone at the port? Then who do I get from the port? Who do I already know within that port? Well Piet, Kees.....” Then you start calling who can help you in the port and who has the funds to finance it. That's not only how it works in the legal world, but in the underworld it has been like that for ages too (E2, personal communication, April 12, 2022).“

Pannunzi was not a man that invented a new system, he was the one that saw the potential in cocaine and he laid the ground work for the dominant position that the 'Ndrangheta took in the European cocaine market. However, he did not do this by inventing a ground breaking new system like sometimes he is claimed to have done.

6.1.1 Network based structuring, deconstructed

These *consorzi* were networks of temporary cooperation for the smuggling of cocaine from Latin America to Europe. The *consorzi* were, like everything in the criminal world, based on opportunism and temporary networks:

“Also the 'Ndrangheta is supposed to be highly hierarchical but in practice they're also often opportunity coalitions. They [criminals] are all opportunists, certainly the Dutch landscape. I just spoke to a lawyer yesterday who said: *you guys are also participating in it again. You are constantly talking about 'organized crime' (gestures with fingers), but it doesn't exist at all, it's all individual figures and this one does it with that one and that one has a quarrel with that one* (E1, personal communication, September 29, 2021b).”

While this heralds back to a discussion on what organized crime is and how it should theoretically be seen, it also demonstrates what the reality of networks is like. I do not wholly agree with the lawyer from the quote, but he does touch upon a problem with constructing organized crime. Just like the discussion explained in chapter 4, about *Operation Crimine* and the construction of 'Ndrangheta as a vertically structured organization, the need that law enforcement has for constructing structure within organized crime should be critically discussed within the context of *consorzi* networks. The structure of *consorzi* is an illuminating blueprint of how these networks are structured from the perspective of the 'Ndrangheta. The example of how the *consorzio* of Roberto Pannunzi was structured can be used when looking at other clans operating in the cocaine market, replacing the names within the blueprint according to the roles within other *consorzi* is useful to see the role of specific 'ndrine and brokers. This does not mean that these cooperation networks are set in stone and last over long periods of time, while this could be deduced from the way that Saviano speaks of these networks. This is very much based on the way that law enforcement operates and that should be critically viewed. Jan Meeus illustrated this by focusing on the manner of investigating by the police:

“What they [the police] often do in drug cases or organized crime cases is that they want to prove it as a criminal organization. Well, then you need links. So what you have classically, those used to come from plotters, which were these diagrams with one person in the middle. Who did he all do business with? Who belongs to whom? That, of course, is a way of adding structure to a very big gush of information, and that form of structuring or modelling, of course, has a flip side. The fact is that the moment there has been one phone call between you and me, we are dealing with each other. But then again, are we dealing with each other structurally or just once? Well, go figure if you are the police and you look at that world and you have to figure it out. So that way of tracing back and forming evidence with which you can convince judges, that they really did it, obviously benefits from that form of structuring and that form of hierarchy, because then you also get: these are running guys, this is the big boss. Then you can punish. So there's a whole model attached to that. And the point, of course, is that, such a criminal justice model, that's obviously a guilder you throw into something, and then it comes out that way. So if they say to the prosecution: 'look what we have drawn dear court: he is on top!' However, was that just at the specific moment the investigation started or was that for a long duration of time (E2, personal communication, April 12, 2022)?”

The term *consorzi* is mostly a name given to a system used by the 'ndrine in the trafficking of cocaine, defining it within the context of the 'Ndrangheta even though this system might not be as inventive as claimed by people like Saviano. These temporary networks are used by many drug trafficking organizations and the investigations of law enforcement construct the way that these *consorzi* are sometimes perceived. However it does constitute a useful blueprint within the context of this thesis.

The concept of *consorzi* is also very important to keep in mind when looking at discourse surrounding the 'Ndrangheta and the trafficking of cocaine, because it is the embodiment of the difference in the real *modus operandi* and the perceived *modus operandi* of the 'Ndrangheta. The discussion on how to define a mafia and my data showing that the 'Ndrangheta is an archipelagos of independent 'ndrine that cooperate in temporary networks is very different than the top-down enterprise structure. The effect is that looking at the 'Ndrangheta as a singular and unitary organization that can have a monopoly in the European cocaine market is an idea that is framed by a politically fueled discourse from law enforcement agencies in Italy. This is one of the central points that I believe makes my thesis critical on the way the 'Ndrangheta is framed in the cocaine market in Europe and therefore in the Netherlands. There are 'ndrine that operate in the cocaine market and they do this in multiple types of roles. However, there is no case of the whole organization being focused on the monopolization of the European cocaine market. Simply for the fact that the cooperation is structured in a temporary system of cooperation between separate and independent 'ndrine. This why statements that propose this do not offer a helpful image:

“The 'Ndrangheta has assumed, in Italy and abroad, a leading role in the international narcotics market, has substantial financial resources, which consolidate its image at the top of transnational organized crime, where it has managed to consolidate real partnerships, as evidenced by direct contacts with the main cartels that put drugs on the world market (Eurispes, 2012, p. 3).”

“An examination of drug trafficking in its associational dimension reveals, again for 2015, the hegemonic role of the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta, which confirms its leadership in the commercialization, worldwide, of cocaine, followed by the Camorra and Apulian organized crime, fully operational, the latter, in the commercialization of drugs imported from Albania (DCSA, 2015, p. 4).”

“The 'ndrangheta, therefore, confirms, as is also evident from ongoing investigations, to have, by now, acquired a position, if not monopolistic, at least oligopolistic, in the context of international cocaine trafficking from South America to Europe. To get cocaine, as a rule, it continues to be the other organizations Italian (and other) criminal organizations to turn to the 'ndrangheta, which, therefore, has assumed the role of a major supplier-both at the Italian and European level-of this product. In short, it can now be said that if, in the economic circuit of cocaine existed, as in that of oil, the "seven sisters" certainly the 'ndrangheta would be one of them (DNA, 2015, p. 23).”

This monopolistic/oligopolistic role of the 'Ndrangheta is seen in the light of the 'Ndrangheta being a singular and vertically structured organization as *Operation Crimine* evidenced:

Beyond these considerations, the 'Ndrangheta's primary area of interest remains that related to drug trafficking, in which they have long invested many rank-and-file families, present in the Catanzaro and Reggio Calabria districts, which have ended up assuming, in the global panorama, a role of absolute prominence in cocaine trafficking, due to the very high degree of reliability and solvency that place them as privileged interlocutors of the great "cartels" of Latin America. Such patterns are common to the entire organization. The operations and evolutionary lines of the Ndrangheta confirm that unity of the organization, with ramifications also in the territories of northern Italy and abroad (DIA, 2020c, p. 6).

This typification and following comparisons of the 'Ndrangheta with legal company structures frames the 'Ndrangheta in a way that is not conducive when trying to unravel the whole of the European cocaine market. This typification is often combined with strong language like: *Pannunzi is the Copernicus of cocaine (La Repubblica, 2013)*. In this way the 'Ndrangheta is framed as an organization that invented the European cocaine market and therefore is still the undisputed monopolistic power which generates unlimited funds.

6.1.2 Never change a winning team

The *consorzio* system not being as inventive as claimed does not withhold the system from being highly effective. The effectivity of the *consorzi* system was due to the fact it fit perfectly within the network based cocaine market in Latin America and Europe. Each *consorzio* could use their own separate connections and brokers to traffic cocaine. Within the fragmented nature of the Latin-American cocaine landscape and the growth of the European market, more 'ndrine joined the market and worked together. The fragmentation of the landscape was no problem for the 'Ndrangheta as the organization has a very autonomous structure so multiple 'ndrine could cooperate with multiple separate organized crime groups in Latin-America (LA Times, 2007). Members and brokers for multiple 'ndrine have been seen/arrested in a multitude of Latin-American countries like Peru (InSight Crime, 2017a), Brazil (InSight Crime, 2019, 2021d, 2022a), Costa Rica (InSight Crime, 2020), Colombia (InSight Crime, 2017b, 2018, 2022b; OCCRP, 2021b) and Mexico (InSight Crime, 2011b). This fragmented and autonomous participation in the trafficking of cocaine made it that within numerous autonomous *consorzi* new 'ndrine could join the cocaine traffic. One constant within these *consorzi* is the cooperation between old and more respected 'ndrine as investors and guarantors of the shipment and younger and less respected 'ndrine as their logistical personnel. Like explained in Chapter 4, it is most important who you know within the organization. The *aristocracy* of some 'ndrine is not only culturally but also entrepreneurially more important than the vertical power structures. In the *Pannunzi consorzio* the aristocratic 'ndrine were the 'ndrine from Platì, they were the financial backers of the

enterprise. This also ties into the family dynasties, because of the role that certain 'ndrine have in the cocaine *consorzi*: Certain clans are experts within certain activities within these chains and they use the reputation, expertise and longevity of their family to prosper. Like explained in Chapter 5, the *Sidernes* became an aristocratic force within the 'Ndrangheta because of their connections to the Plati 'ndrine, their migration to Canada and subsequent role in the logistical process of the *consorzio* of *Pannunzi*. There is a progression in working with aristocratic 'ndrine, when an 'ndrina earns significant funds and reputation because of working with these more important 'ndrine after a while they can grow into new roles within *consorzi*. This growth makes it so that an 'ndrina can grow from logistical personnel to financial backers. Anna Sergi explained, the higher in standing you become the further away you become from the cocaine itself:

“He [Luigi Mancuso] grows apart from going to prison, his extended family gets involved, so they become proper 'Ndrangheta. They all become involved in this. Fast forward when he comes out 2012, he comes out for the first time before being arrested for *Rinascita*²⁹ again in 2019. He doesn't do drugs anymore. That's out of the question. Why would he do drugs? He's too high for that. So what he does is exactly what Piromalli³⁰ did with him. He offers protection and he offers guarantees. So it's a guarantee system. And the guarantee system is based on the good word of those who came before you. And that's how now the Mancuso figure is among the top ten of the 'Ndrangheta families, because they have the money, they have the connection, but also because they don't touch drugs anymore. They don't. But they allow others to enter the market. So we are talking about financing the cocaine trade (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022).”

This guarantee system can be compared to what Varese would call illegal governance over markets. Offering guarantees and offering protection is the way to govern illegal markets and that is what mafias do according to Varese:

²⁹ The *Rinascita-Scott* trial is the Maxi process against the Mancuso clan and their affiliates in the province of Vibo Valentia in which 350-400 people stand trial.

³⁰ Girolamo 'Mommo' Piromalli was one of the most powerful bosses of the 'Ndrangheta in the 1980's and 1990's, will be discussed later in this chapter.

“So the point that the Gambetta makes is that the Sicilian Mafia hasn't really changed across the century. You could say this for the 'Ndrangheta as well. Yeah. So they are still into governance or protection. What changes is the market they protect. So obviously you cannot be into governance or protection of drugs in the 19th century because there was no drugs. But they did controlled products from land agriculture. Then they got into cigarettes, then they got into construction, then they got into drugs. Now they may be getting into environmental stuff just because the money is there. But Gambetta makes the point that what is changing, is the market that pops up is being relevant and rich. Yeah, but the activity is still the same. Arlacchi on the other end makes the point that there was a transition from an agricultural rural mafia to a city mafia. So I think when people talk about entrepreneurial something, for me that's not a mafia, it's an entrepreneur. So you are an entrepreneur and you may be involved in buying drugs. You may be involved in trafficking, you may be involved in moving people, moving goods and services. So if you are a human trafficker from Libya to Italy, you put people on a boat and then you take them to the other side. That's not an entrepreneurial mafia. It's just a guy who traffics people (E7, personal communication, May 24, 2022).”

While I agree with the stance that Varese and Gambetta have when looking at the focus on governance within the market that highly evolved 'ndrine have, I do not see that it is possible to divide entrepreneurial organizations with mafia organizations purely on this basis. This comes from my typification of the organizational structure of the 'Ndrangheta and is evidenced by the changes in roles that 'ndrine can have within the networks of cocaine trafficking. It is possible that the Sicilian Cosa Nostra is such a different organization and that Gambetta's reasoning only lives up for Cosa Nostra. However, seeing how I classified the 'Ndrangheta and from that standpoint mafia as multidimensional I have a more nuanced view on this division. There are differences within the organization and changes can happen. Being an entrepreneurial oriented 'ndrina in the cocaine market, focusing on the logistical side can help 'ndrine become aristocratic 'ndrine that can act as guarantors and protectors or what Varese would call mafias in the market. In a sense this is the complete opposite of what Arlacchi would argue as the evolution of the mafia, from *entrepreneurial mafia* to *traditional mafia*. The multi-dimensionality and multi-functionality I discussed in chapter 4 becomes visible when the cocaine *consorzi* are concerned. This is why I frame the *entrepreneurial* and the *traditional mafia* as dimensions that exist within the same organization.

6.1.3 Maluferru, contemporary brokering

This is well illustrated when looking at Figure 6.3: A more contemporary example of a *consorzio* in which the old aristocratic 'ndrine play dominant roles and newer 'ndrine perform in other roles. This figure is the schematic representation of *Operation Platinum*, a follow-up investigation of *Operation*

*Pollino*³¹. Which explains schematically how the cocaine *consorzio* of some San Luca clans operated and were related to one another, led by 'Ndrangheta broker Guisepepe Romeo better known as *Maluferru*³². Here the broker *Maluferru* was a member of the *Romeo-Staccu* clan, but was financially backed by the *Pelle-Gambazza* clan of old *Capo Crimine Antonio 'Gambazza' Pelle* and other clans from San Luca like the *Nirta-Scalzone*³³ and the *Pelle-Vottari* (OCCRP, 2021b). *Maluferru* cooperated with the *Giorgi-Boviciani* 'ndrina because of their connections in Latin America and their assets in Germany³⁴. The *Pelle-Gambazza* using their heritage as 'Ndrangheta Aristocracy and as such their 'brand name' combined with their financial might to endure as a dominant clan within the cocaine *consorzio* (E3, personal communication, April 4, 2022; Strill.it, 2007). This *consorzio* made use of multiple routes into Europe, from for example West-Africa, Spain and the Netherlands (OCCRP, 2021a). In Belgium they had contacts with a Calabrian drug trafficking family from Maasmechelen, a description which strikes a similarity with the Aquino's discussed in chapter 5. *Maluferru* himself was apprehended in Barcelona after several failed attempts in for example Belgium, Abidjan (Ivory Coast) and Calabria (Crimesite.nl, 2021; OCCRP, 2021b). In Barcelona he lived for a little while with Vincenzo Macrì, son of old *Capo Crimine Antonio Macrì* (OCCRP, 2021a). These locations were used for the import and transit of cocaine by the *consorzio*. The *consorzio* changed routes regularly because of their presence in multiple locations. This is a testament to the manner of fragmentation within a *consorzio*, the use of multiple routes and import locations and the manner in which these temporary networks operate.

³¹ Will be discussed in Chapter 7.

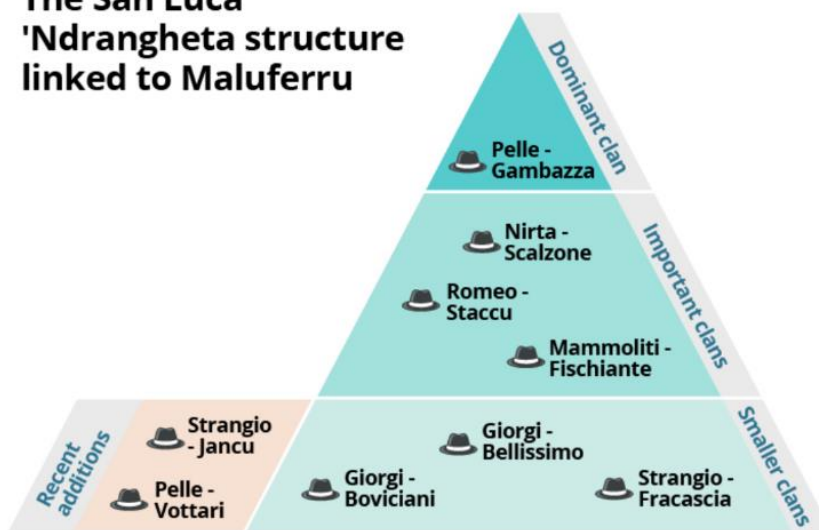
³² Calabrian slang for 'Armed and Dangerous'.

³³ Not related to the *Nirta-Strangio* 'ndrina.

³⁴ The *Giorgi-Boviciani*, *Nirta-Scalzone* and *Pelle-Vottari* will be discussed again in chapter 7.

Figure 6.3: Scheme of a San Luca consorzio of cocaine traffickers

The San Luca 'Ndrangheta structure linked to Maluferru



Source (OCCRP, 2021)

Because of the temporary nature of these *consorzi* not all the 'ndrine involved are always involved, while the broker seems to be always involved, and they will switch between active involvement according to the route used at a specific moment in time (DIA, 2008; DNA, 2012, 2016, 2020). This is why numerous 'ndrine can be filled into the schematic of a *consorzio*, like the plotters that Jan Meeus mentioned. In all these locations the *consorzio* made connections with local organized crime groups to help them with the so-called heavy lifting. The fragmented nature of the 'Ndrangheta makes it so that the organization is not only present in a multitude of production countries but also present in a multitude of transit countries. This presence is mostly based upon *Functional Diversification* of certain roles within the trafficking chain, like *brokers* and *intermediaries*. For example:

According to the records of *Operation Decollo* (take off) conducted by the Italian General Anti-Mafia Prosecutor Office, from 2000 to 2004 the Calabrian Ndrangheta families Mancuso and Pesce shipped several hundred kilos of cocaine from Colombia via Togo to the container port of Gioia Tauro, South of Italy. The first shipment of some 430 kilos of cocaine from Cartagena (Colombia) via the port of Lomé (Togo) arrived in Italy in March 2000; the last of 250 kilos in January 2004. In this case, the cocaine was concealed in containers containing marbles, leather, plastic, and tuna cans (Mazzitelli, 2011).

And not only the 'Ndrangheta *consorzi* are made up of temporary networks and can therefore change by route, the *delocalization* of local groups used changes with the switches in routes. This way the networks observed by law enforcement can contain a large variety of local groups used:

“IrpiMedia and OCCRP used court and police documents, and interviews with law enforcement sources, to reconstruct a years-long police investigation into a network of Albanians, Romanians, Colombians, Mexicans and Brazilians, spanning not just the ports of Europe, but also the criminal hubs of Latin America and West Africa (OCCRP, 2021a).”

6.1.3 Out of Sight, Out of Mind

The ‘Ndrangheta connected with local groups in foreign countries whenever they could, subcontracting these groups and individuals within their networks. This way the ‘ndrine were even more removed from the trafficking themselves. The ‘Ndrangheta combined this with a strategy of remaining under the radar by committing to not be violent in the foreign countries that they migrated to (de Boer, 2020; EMCDDA, 2021; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016a). With the clear exception of the *Strage di Duisburg*, the ‘ndrine remained mostly non-violent in countries like for example Spain, Germany and the Netherlands (*El País*, 2021; *Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie*, 2017; OCCRP, 2022b; Spapens, 2019). Some see this as an effect of the *Pax Mafiosa* that the ‘Ndrangheta tried to uphold: a gentlemen’s agreement to be non-violent because violence would hurt business (Sergi, 2022, p. 23). However, looking at the literature when focusing on the cocaine market the involvement of ‘Ndrangheta is mostly in the *oligopolistic sector* of the cocaine market. Arlacchi explains that the *oligopolistic sector* of the market is less violent because of the less amount of actors involved and less territorial disputes that can be observed (Arlacchi, 1998). While there is great demand for cocaine in Europe at street level, the *consorzi* discussed are mostly used to wholesale distribute cocaine and therefore act in the middle-market level (Eventon & Bewley-Taylor, 2016; UNODC & Europol, 2021). This middle-market is where the *oligopolistic sector* resides. So the non-violence of ‘Ndrangheta can be seen as a logical consequence of the involvement in the middle-market. However, for the sake of argument, the non-violence of ‘Ndrangheta in the cocaine market can also be seen as a deliberate strategy to remain from the limelight. A report of Transcrime follows the German *Bundeskriminalamt* and the Italian DNA and DIA in their definition and calls this strategy the submersion strategy (Transcrime, 2018). Which worked because of the focus on high impact crimes in for example the Netherlands:

“Organized crime, they [Dutch government and law enforcement] thought, was a bit like, yes, let these guys shoot each other, nobody will be bothered. So that was investigated, but there was less investigation. Then you have another group of foreigners, Italians, who play the game very delicately, and yes, we don't do murder in the Netherlands, because we would attract too much attention. So they stay completely under the radar, they go about their business cleanly and you don't really notice anything. And if someone gets caught, it's an Albanian because they do make sure they don't take out the containers themselves. So they stay well out of sight. So for years there has been absolutely no focus to go and fight the Italian mafia. Every now and then they would get a tip-off from Italy and then someone would be picked up for a while. And that's it and that's why it was thought that the problem was not that big in the Netherlands (E1, personal communication, September 29, 2021b).”

The 'Ndrangheta learned this by looking at the Cosa Nostra:

“So if I keep it with Italian organized crime, why don't they come under the spotlight? They learned a lot from the state fight against Cosa Nostra in the 1980s and 1990s. There they [Cosa Nostra] went mega excessive, that was beaten down cold, Cosa Nostra halved and in the shadow of that, of course, the 'Ndrangheta rose. Who looked very carefully: this is how they did it. They are now getting all the attention. We shouldn't want that. 'Ndrangheta also existed for a very long time and that's also always funny because Italy says that: yes, but you didn't acknowledge that you had that mafia and then I say: yes, but you at some point didn't acknowledge that you had 'Ndrangheta. So give us also (some time), at the time it was also said: yes Mafia is only Cosa Nostra, we don't have 'Ndrangheta (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022).”

This strategy of remaining under the radar by using delocalization to remain at a certain distance from the drugs themselves is also seen by the Dutch police:

“Yes, I think that, in Rotterdam it will also happen, but yes, if you had to compare, I think the target group we are talking about, they might not even move that much in Rotterdam, because they will be too close to the merchandise. I think they always build some layers in between to ensure that that distance remains. We actually always say again, you will never find an average Italian broker with his fingers in the coke and obviously that has changed with Sky³⁵ a bit. You do see with Sky communications, that suddenly photos of shipments do get exchanged fairly directly with each other, so of course you incriminate yourself. But Sky is of course such a new concept that they didn't understand at the time of: if I throw a photo of a shipment over this then it's going to bite me in the ass later because that wasn't yet... (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022).”

³⁵ Sky ECC communication is an encrypted communication service used by organized crime, like PGP and Encrochat

With the exception of encrypted communication services in which the 'ndrine were incriminating themselves, the strategy is always of creating distance between the deal and the 'Ndranghetisti themselves.

6.1.4 Delocalization as evidence against monopolies

In the wake of the evolution of the market and the growth of certain 'ndrine from logistical personnel to more distant roles within the networks, the sub-contracted groups grew along with these 'ndrine (InSight Crime, 2021a, 2021e; UNODC & Europol, 2021). These groups could take up more involved functions within the networks, growing from mere extracting cocaine from the ports to having more logistical responsibilities (EMCDDA, 2022). One of the first groups used by the Italian groups like 'Ndrangheta were Albanian networks (Saggers, 2019). Because of this early sub-contracting by the 'ndrine the Albanians offer a clear view on the effect that cooperation with the 'ndrine can have. The Albanian networks rose to prominence in the wake of helping the Italian mafia as well, building their brand and securing the necessary connections in Latin America:

“So then Albanians, which were first handlers for the Italian mafia. They learned the trick that way, watched: how does that work? And they adopted that. After a while they could copy the trick and move into the territory and that was also helped by the violence of Moroccan groups in the Netherlands. So at one point you saw that when this *Mocromaffia* started killing each other and I don't know what. Then they started protesting in South America of: guys, you stand out too much and this is bad for business. And then they joined up with other parties again (E1, personal communication, September 29, 2021b).”

Combined with external factors, but helped by the knowledge learned and connections by operating for the 'Ndrangheta as their logistical personnel, Albanians grew to prominence. Some of these Albanian networks moved their operations more upstream to Latin America and became independent:

“Having learned the trade of cocaine smuggling from others, Albanian-speaking OCGs developed the capability and investment potential to become independent. An often-reported friendly initial approach to new customers or potential competitors, coupled with a reputation for ruthlessness, is thought to underpin their capacity to develop relationships, while maintaining control over them. Their reputation for being reliable and timely and for providing high-quality, competitively priced cocaine inevitably fast tracked their status as traffickers (Saggers, 2019, p. 12).”

In this way Albanian groups experienced a same kind of growth that less important 'ndrine experienced when the 'Ndrangheta started out in the cocaine business. So the process of *delocalization*, in which local groups like Albanians were used was not only useful for the 'ndrine but also meant a ladder for these local groups to rise in prominence (Euronews Albania, 2022; OCCRP, 2019, 2022a; Saggers, 2019). This evolution of groups is one of the factors that contributed to the fragmentation of the European cocaine market and that raises questions on the nature of 'Ndrangheta involvement in this market

(Caulkins & Reuter, 1998; EMCDDA, 2021; UNODC & Europol, 2021). The 'Ndrangheta is still seen by some as the main wholesale importers in Europe, answering the question on the role of the 'Ndrangheta as still being an important link in the importation of cocaine and distribution to other groups like the Albanians and Moroccans:

“Indeed then if they can get enough money together to make a deal in Colombia, anywhere in those countries there, and they say: ‘Okay, that’s coming and we’ll get you that money’. That is also beneficial for the 'Ndrangheta, that they don't have to pay immediately. So if you have that much trust, that you don't have to pay right away and a whole bunch [of cocaine] arrives that is not intercepted and you give some to Taghi and his gang here, you give some to the Albanians, you give some to the Dutch criminals. You of all those layers have the most [influence/coke] That's what I imagine then. Because you ('Ndrangheta) bear the first risk (E3, personal communication, April 4, 2022).”

This is disputed by others, like criminologist Letizia Paoli:

“I simply see no evidence for a monopoly of 'Ndrangheta. There are multiple groups active in Europe with cocaine and in Latin America. The Italians were one of the first to join in the cocaine, but they are certainly not the only ones now. There are people that say that because of the fact that they are not seen dealing cocaine that they have to be wholesale importers and distributors, but I see no direct evidence for that (E5, personal communication, May 3, 2022).”

The Dutch National Police sees an evolution of the 'Ndrangheta's role in the cocaine market:

So I think, where maybe five years ago we would have said: yes, they have a role from import to get it further into Europe, I think we have to adjust that to: they are really here as a middle man between source country and retail country. And we also do often have a role where they really do get involved from source to retail market (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022).

The use of local organized crime groups with the process of *delocalization* by the 'ndrine was not only a strategic choice by the 'ndrine, separating themselves from the merchandise and therefore taking less risk, but had a side effect. This side effect of this *delocalization* is the way that there are multiple ways of seeing the role of 'Ndrangheta within the European cocaine market today. This modus operandi of the 'ndrine came from the early cocaine *consorzi* and was taken into more contemporary times by the 'ndrine, but the side effect of it is the fact that the field has been muddied and multiple contradicting voices are heard within the subject. However, how can the historical presence of the 'ndrine in the cocaine market be seen from production region to distribution region? It has been discussed that Roberto Pannunzi started the involvement of the 'Ndrangheta in cocaine in the 1980's, but I have thus far focused on the blue print of the *consorzi*. To understand fully how the 'ndrine made their ways in the cocaine market, it is vital to see the historical connections between the 'ndrine and

the cocaine market. There is also a similar evolution of the market visible as the one discussed in light of the *delocalization* in Europe.

6.2 The power of a Brand

The history of 'Ndrangheta in Latin America is historically linked to the influence of two important changes in the cocaine landscape and the characteristics of the organization as a whole. Because of the historical cooperation with the Cosa Nostra and the focus of the Cosa Nostra on the trafficking of heroin, the 'Ndrangheta had very early access to smuggling routes to Europe and contacts in the Latin-American cocaine market (Ciconte, 2014; Forgione, 2009; *La Repubblica*, 2013). With this early step into the cocaine market which was linked to the notorious Cosa Nostra, the 'Ndrangheta built a reputation for itself which has ramifications for contemporary frames. 6.2 will discuss the way this reputation was used by the 'Ndrangheta in the cocaine market and still has influence over the frames used by law enforcement. When from the 1980's to the early 2000's the drug market changed significantly because of the growing European cocaine market and the decline of Cosa Nostra's influence on the international drug market the 'ndrine had the opportunity to use their historical connections to invest and profit from these changes (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022; E7, personal communication, May 24, 2022; E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022; NRC, 2009a; Sergi, 2022). They used the monetary power that they possessed, because of for example the *Season of Kidnappings*, to become *wholesale importers* in the cocaine market. They were not hindered by the fragmentation of the cocaine market because of the fragmented structure of their organization. In this way they could autonomously do business with paramilitary and leftist-guerrilla groups that were in conflict in Colombia and with other cocaine production and exporting networks (InSight Crime, 2011a, 2013, 2018; Kenney, 2007). Collaboration between autonomous 'ndrine in the form of *consorzi* in which the 'Ndrangheta *aristocracy* collaborated with smaller and less important clans proved to be a system that helped the 'ndrine to become more entrenched the Latin-American cocaine market while controlling multiple distribution chains within one organization (*Commissione Parlamentare*, 2018; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016b). This fragmented structure in which smaller networks operated but having multiple 'ndrine profit from the same market placed the 'Ndrangheta in the higher echelons of the growing European cocaine trade:

“Since then ³⁶, the European cocaine trade has opened up, both geographically and strategically. Now, there are more routes and more actors involved than ever before. But the Italian mafia remain at the forefront of this expansion. Police and intelligence sources all around Latin America report their presence. In Brazil, today one of the main dispatch points to Europe, according to Europol, police sources described how they uncovered an alliance between the ‘Ndrangheta and Brazil’s most powerful criminal group, the *First Capital Command (Primeiro Comando da Capital – PCC)* in 2017. In Costa Rica, intelligence sources say they are the most common European actor found trafficking in the country, while in Peru, police report that the Italians are among the main financiers of cocaine shipments. Brokers, many of them resident upstream, remain the lynchpin of their operations, with their connections to suppliers and dispatch networks. “The ‘Ndrangheta have brokers in these countries, typically in Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, the Dominican Republic and Costa Rica, and these brokers try to organize the sales from these countries using legal businesses,” said Maurizio Catino, an expert on the Italian mafia and author of the book “Mafia Organizations.” “In these countries, there are ‘Ndrangheta logistics cells for trafficking cocaine through the movement of goods for export to North America and Europe,” he added (InSight Crime, 2021c).”

The ‘Ndrangheta became an European partner of the Colombian groups, being an international organization that had cells in North-America, West-Africa and European countries, having a strong monetary presence because of the kidnappings and multitude of other criminal activities combined with steady presence of members and brokers in South-America (Ciconte, 2014; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016b). The ‘ndrine used a combination of *delocalization* and *functional diversification* in South-American and West-African countries, using the local groups and migrating in small scale to have a presence in the whole supply chain while being close to the source of the cocaine (Global Initiative, 2021; InSight Crime, 2021c; Mazzitelli, 2011). They did not have to use *transplantation* as the reasons for migration were purely based on the *entrepreneurial dimension* of their activities. This also strengthened their reputation in the source countries as it was evidenced in *Operation Igres*, the operation that dismantled the operation of Roberto Pannunzi and arrested him in Madrid in 2004 (di Franco, 2020). Here it was found that the ‘Ndrangheta did not have to give away affiliates for ransom as insurance to Colombian groups, which is standard business for other groups. It was also evidenced that only the ‘ndrine could pay the shipments afterwards (de Boer, 2020; DIA, 2007; E3, personal communication, April 4, 2022). This strong connection with the major cocaine smugglers of the 1990’s was because of their reputation in the business, led by the brand notoriety of the aristocratic ‘ndrine that acted as the financial backers and guarantors of the shipments (*Commissione Parlamentare*, 2018; di Franco, 2020; Saviano, 2015). The reason that the ‘ndrine have been able to make connections with all these groups is because of their brand name, making use of

³⁶ The disbanding of the *FARC* and the *AUC*.

the brand name of the 'Ndrangheta as a whole, certain aristocratic 'ndrine but also just the fact that they are Italian:

“E1: But cocaine from Colombia, that was mainly distributed through the Mexicans to America and eventually to Europe. That was the role the Mexican gangs had. Those Mexicans and Colombians didn't want to do business with some random group from the Netherlands. So you need big groups for that, who are sure of payment, who fulfil their agreements well, so then you have to think: what is 'Ndrangheta like? It's highly hierarchical they have Omertá, so nobody talks to the police or your head goes off. It's an organization that's huge and has a billion-dollar turnover so is good on pay and man to man word to word. So the 'Ndrangheta had a kind of stamp of quality.

J.B.S.: So they functioned as a hallmark of quality?

E1: Yes, hallmark indeed, of you can do fine business with them. That's why people liked that the 'Ndrangheta was involved in the transports to Europe back then. So of course there were other big organizations, but the 'Ndrangheta was certainly an appealing one of those (E1, personal communication, September 29, 2021b).”

This brand name is not based on thin air according to the Dutch Police:

“Well actually, when I get this question, I always indicate that they have been doing this for centuries. If you ask me: they are, so to speak, the blueprint of organized crime. They have been doing it the longest, so they do it the best and are the most professional. You also ask a *vakidoot*³⁷. But that is also objectively, I think, how we should look after that. You also see that the way of operating is slowly spilling over into other groups as well (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022).”

This reputation not only comes from the fact that the 'Ndrangheta is an iteration of the Italian mafia, which is a major contributing factor in Latin America according to an investigative journalist from Latin America:

“For some Colombian traffickers it is a prestige thing to work with the Italian Mafia, popular media has had that effect for sure. In Colombia there really is a cultural focus on 'Cartels', the bigger and the more armed you are, the more important you are. That idea gets projected on network based organizations as well. If you look at Latin American sources, nowadays they have started talking a lot about the 'Balkan Cartel' as well. The reputation of the Italian Mafia is something very similar (E6, personal communication, May 12, 2022).”

The longstanding collaboration between the 'Ndrangheta and Latin American networks that started in the 1980's with Roberto Pannunzi is a very important reason for the high standing reputation of the 'ndrine.

³⁷ Someone who might be a bit too far invested in their work

6.2.1 Monopoly versus Oligopoly

This does not mean that 'Ndrangheta is one of the only groups that are active in Latin America for the purpose of the European market. In the wake of the growth of for example Albanian groups and further fragmentation of the European and Latin American market, other groups have been able to challenge the supposed wholesale trafficking monopoly of the 'Ndrangheta:

“The fragmentation and diversification of the criminal landscape in Colombia may have disrupted the previously successful business model of monopolized access to cocaine in Colombia for established European criminal networks, such as the Italian 'Ndrangheta, and provided the space for a broader range of emerging European DTOs to expand their contacts and relationships with cocaine producers in the source regions of Latin America. It seems that, while established criminal networks such as the 'Ndrangheta still dominate the wholesale supply of cocaine from Latin America to Europe, they no longer maintain an oligopoly and have been unable to deny other European DTOs entry to the wholesale market for cocaine in Latin America (UNODC & Europol, 2021, p. 18).”

This is important to note, because it helps to shape the view of the 'Ndrangheta in the European market as well. The *oligopolistic sector* of the cocaine market is seeing more and more groups enter the market while violence seems to mostly be about retail level territorial disputes or deals gone wrong and thus in the *competitive sector*, cementing yet again the grey area of the middle-market in which the 'Ndrangheta operates (EMCDDA, 2021; KLPD - *Dienst Nationale Recherche*, 2012; Staring *et al.*, 2019). This does not mean in my opinion that there is necessarily a loss of an oligopoly in the cocaine market. Looking at the Oxford Languages definition of the word oligopoly it says: *a state of limited competition, in which a market is shared by a small number of producers or sellers* (Oxford Dictionaries, 2022). The state of limited competition is in my opinion the most important aspect of an oligopoly, the fact that that has historically arisen from the fact that there was a small number of sellers is in my view of secondary importance. This also comes from the fact that 'a small number of sellers' is such an abstract way to explain a section of a market, that I do not see the fragmentation in the wholesale cocaine market as necessarily problematic when violent competition remains at a low level. This low level of violent competition comes from the fact that there is so much cocaine that fragmentation of the import and distribution market does not conclude in competitiveness amongst groups:

"J.B.S: I was also talking to Koen [Voskuil] about what you see, for example, about Saïd Razzouki, who is also arrested in South America, or Piet Costa, who is very much in the news at the moment, that they have also picked it up reasonably well themselves. But I was talking to Jan Meeus about that and he said: yes, but actually, that's not competition for each other.

E4: No, there is enough.

J.B.S: There is enough, so in that sense if you have competition, it's often more about the retail market and you're going to have to compete on that, but import no so much, you would say that too?

E4: Yes, I would endorse that. I think there is so much supply, demand and supply, that they don't have to be afraid of each other, of a territory battle. See. I think: if there does come a conflict, it has to do with conflict over deals that run differently. Look of course there is collaboration. You often see that in a shipment there are multiple investors. Well and then if one shipment gets lost, everyone is angry with each other and then the finger-pointing starts, so to speak, but I think, if you see the lines separately next to each other of: Are they bothering each other? Then I think no (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022)."

This would mean that the 'Ndrangheta still plays a role in the cocaine market and therefore in the Dutch cocaine market.

6.2.2 A good reputation lasts

This role is as one of the actors in the *oligopolistic sector* of the cocaine market in which the 'ndrine are involved in the wholesale distribution of cocaine. The discourse surrounding the 'Ndrangheta and their role in the cocaine market is still much based on the idea that they have a monopoly on the market. The brand name that they use in the criminal world is still repeated by Italian law enforcement, Italian research institutes and therefore public media. The fact that there are less violent feuds fought in the *oligopolistic sector* and the use of *delocalization* by the 'Ndrangheta while being active in multiple countries is seen as evidence that the 'Ndrangheta is still the actor with a monopoly. I have reputed the idea of the 'Ndrangheta being a singular organization and the idea that there is a monopoly of the 'Ndrangheta in the cocaine market. However, the idea is still present and constructs the way that the role of different organized crime groups are framed. The *delocalization* that helped for example the Albanians in their rise is framed as a cooperation in which the Albanians are the dumb workforce for the all-encompassing and controlling 'Ndrangheta. The role of Albanian and other groups can have, is framed by Italian law enforcement as secondary (DIA, 2017a, 2018a, 2019a; DNA, 2016, 2017, 2019). The 'Ndrangheta was one of the earliest European groups that invested in the cocaine market and their presence in Latin American countries is used as evidence that they are still the major European wholesale traffickers. The reputation that they are one of the only actors that do not have to give members ransom are examples of why the 'Ndrangheta is still seen in this role. This will not

change as long as the 'Ndrangheta are said to have a monopoly in the European cocaine market. The focus of Italian law enforcement on the 'Ndrangheta monopoly is followed by Italian research institutes and therefore public media and thus the 'Ndrangheta will be framed as a monopolistic force in the European cocaine market. This focus constructs the way that is looked towards other organized crime groups. The discourse of the 'Ndrangheta controlling the cocaine market can be academically explained by looking at the *traditional mafia dimension* and taking the idea of Gambetta of what the mafia does:

“So they are still into governance or protection. What changes is the market they protect. So obviously you cannot be into governance or protection of drugs in the 19th century because there was no drugs. But they did control products from land agriculture. Then they got into cigarettes, then they got into construction, then they got into drugs. Now they may be getting into environmental stuff just because the money is there. But Gambetta makes the point that what is changing, is the market that pops up is being relevant and rich. Yeah, but the activity is still the same (E7, personal communication, May 24, 2022).”

However, the idea of having governance over the illegal cocaine market can be misinterpreted and therefore be too all encompassing or abstract. How can one organization control a whole illegal market? The answers given by public media and *moral entrepreneurs* are as abstract as they are ominous (AD, 2017a, 2017b; De Morgen, 2010; Eurispes, 2012; LA Times, 2007; NRC, 2007, 2009a, 2009a, 2009c; NWS, 2018; Quote, 2010; Rinaldi, 2014; Spolar, 2008; VICE, 2017). The view seems to be that the reason that the 'Ndrangheta is not seen in investigations on cocaine is the fact that they are too important to touch the cocaine itself. They are so distanced from the cocaine that they organize and control everything from the highest echelons. While this view does have some merit, which I have discussed and will discuss in the example of Gioia Tauro, it cannot be extended as a rule. This is why the typification of the 'Ndrangheta structure yields very different views and measures of importance in the European cocaine market. The other reason why this view has become central in discourse surrounding the 'Ndrangheta is the focus of Italian law enforcement on Italy. This will be touched upon later.

There is an historic line to be seen with the 'ndrine and their Latin American connections and the way that the landscape has changed, which is important for the role of the 'Ndrangheta in the European and, for this thesis most important, Dutch market. This line goes hand in hand with the reputation of the 'Ndrangheta, which was built on the basis of their early entry into the cocaine market and has not changed in the frame used by *moral entrepreneurs*. The way that the 'Ndrangheta is still seen within this frame is indicative of the powerful brand of the 'Ndrangheta. However as discussed, the *delocalization* of the 'Ndrangheta and the *oligopolistic sector* in which they are active one could

postulate that this reputation is no longer realistic and is dominantly used to further the use of the monopolistic frame by *moral entrepreneurs*. Meanwhile the Dutch market has grown in importance for the 'Ndrangheta because of another historic line of events that has to do with the most dominant entry point used by the 'ndrine. The most important entry point for the 'Ndrangheta was the port of Gioia Tauro from the 1980's onwards, this was because of their power within the port. Before one can see the importance of the Dutch market as a transit market for the 'ndrine, it is important to note how the port of Gioia Tauro shaped the importance of the 'ndrine in the whole of the European market.

6.3 Gioia Tauro: The misunderstood Mafia port

The port of Gioia Tauro was initially build as a supportive port for what should have been a steel plant:

“The story of the port of Gioia Tauro dates back to the beginning of the 1970s, when following an outbreak of violence in Reggio Calabria in 1970, the ‘Reggio riots’, as a compensation measure, it was decided to build a large steel plant, intended to become the fifth Italian steel industry centre and meant to bring income and jobs to Calabria (7,500 new jobs were expected). In order to support the plant operations it was decided to build an artificial port in the Gioia Tauro Plain, where 700,000 lemon, orange and olive trees were growing and six hundred farmers were working. The village of Eranova had to be destroyed and 200 families re-settled (CSIL, 2012, p. 13).”

This steel plant was never build, but the port was build. The 'ndrine from Gioia Tauro exploited the construction of the steelworks and there was a crisis in the steel industry so the project was abandoned (Spotts & Wieser, 1986). Gioia Tauro became the biggest port of Italy and the 9th biggest port of Europe (CSIL, 2012). This meant a huge new opportunity for the 'ndrine from the *Gioia Tauro Piana* in the *Tirrenica Mandamento*. The 'ndrine from the region were from the very beginning embedded in the building of the port and remained heavily influential in the inner workings of the port after it was build. The conflict between the local 'ndrine over the contracts and subsequent influence over the port raised the homicide rate of Gioia Tauro over that of New York city because of the 1000 homicides committed (Spotts & Wieser, 1986). This influence over the biggest Italian port catapulted these 'ndrine into a new stratosphere and as such made some of them part of the 'Ndrangheta aristocracy (Cicone, 2014; de Boer, 2020; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009). The 'ndrine were so embedded that they took a tax on each container that passed the port, whatever the goods within these containers (Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009). However for most of the 'ndrine Gioia Tauro meant the perfect location to import their cocaine shipments:

“We invest the money, we control part of the delivery meaning that and that was because of Gioia Tauro. So no, we why would we wait 50 kilometers down the road if we can go to the port and in the port the situation is particularly easy to access once you have the right connections. So for years Gioia Tauro made it possible to have a unique, unique situation that no other group has ever had in Europe to import where you finance.

[...]

But for the ten years or so in which most of the cocaine arrives through Gioia Tauro, we had a unique situation in Europe where the people who imported and financed the jobs were also the ones who collected and distributed. And that gave them the monopoly that everyone talks about, at least in Italy, and obviously brokering, if anything, to other groups (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022).”

Federico Varese explained that this situation made it possible for the ‘Ndrangheta to govern the market, using a *traditional mafia* dimension on this illegal market:

“So if drugs are so important and remember, Calabria used to be so much central in the drug trade because they were coming to the Gioia Tauro harbor. So they controlled that as a governance, so. They are not into drugs in general. Because they control the key node in the network and they control it through governance. They enter the drugs market and the moment that that is gone, they don't control that. Then they're just like another group. And Sicily never had such an important port. And so they [the ‘Ndrangheta] at some point, they were very important, very central in the drug trade, and now they are not anymore because there are better places to send the drugs (E7, personal communication, May 24, 2022).”

I agree in a sense with what Varese claims. However, I think that it is hard to see the whole of the ‘Ndrangheta as a mafia that controls the cocaine market. This governance over the key node of the cocaine market cannot be seen as an organization-wide activity. I question the fact that Gioia Tauro was the major key node in the European market at all. However, even if it was, the governance over this key node was not in the hands of the whole ‘Ndrangheta. As I have explained, the ‘Ndrangheta is a fragmented archipelagos of clans that have widely varying standing within the whole underworld and within the archipelagos itself. This governance over the key node was in the hands of a handful of clans that belonged to the aristocracy. These clans even became part of the aristocracy because of their governance over Gioia Tauro. I would therefore say that not the ‘Ndrangheta controlled the key node of Gioia Tauro through governance but the aristocracy of the ‘ndrine from the *Piana Mandamento*, where Gioia Tauro is located.

However, the idea that Gioia Tauro was controlled by the ‘Ndrangheta is essential in the discourse about the ‘Ndrangheta’s monopoly of the cocaine market in Europe. In the theoretical framework it was explained that illegal markets were characterized by the assumption of monopolization. In more

contemporary times the academic world does not characterize illegal markets as easily monopolized, but this thinking is still deeply ingrained in the way that illegal markets are seen by law enforcement and the public media. The control that some 'ndrine have over the port of Gioia Tauro is therefore often characterized as the total control of one single organization over the main entry point of cocaine in Italy. This idea of a monopoly by the 'Ndrangheta goes hand in hand with the comparisons of the 'Ndrangheta to a holding and/or legal enterprises. A single organization that monopolized the cocaine market in Italy by virtue of their total control over the main entry point. This idea is recounted once and again by Italian magistrates and law enforcement, but may be based on a focus on Gioia Tauro as entry point (DIA, 2007, 2008, 2020c; DNA, 2012, 2015, 2016, 2017; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009, 2010; *La Repubblica*, 2013; Saviano, 2015). When 80% of the cocaine that is seized in Italy is seized in Gioia Tauro, then that does not necessarily mean that 80% of the cocaine market of Italy is imported via Gioia Tauro. This thinking is very much propagated by Italian law enforcement still:

“Previous Reports had already enucleated the data concerning the quantities of narcotics seized at the Gioia Tauro maritime port of call, which has always been considered the favored port location for the entry of cocaine from South America into Europe. In 2020, the increase in drug seizures at the Calabrian port was even more pronounced, taking into account the more than 2,600 kilograms recovered in the first half of the year and the approximately kg 2,500 in the second. After all, it was on November 4, 2020 that the maxi seizure of nearly a ton of very pure cocaine stowed in a container carrying frozen mussels from Chile. The operation carried out by the Gioia Tauro Customs Agency and the *Guardia di Finanza* has enabled the recovery of a drug shipment that, cut up to four times, would have yielded about 190 million euros on the market (DNA, 2020, pp. 18–19).”

This idea adds oil to the flame because public media takes these statements and combines them with the idea of the 'Ndrangheta as the enterprise with record revenues every year and concludes that the 'Ndrangheta is the criminal enterprise that monopolized the cocaine market in Italy. This is where headlines like: *Little known Mafia is Cocaine King* (LA Times, 2007). However, when looking at the inner workings of the 'Ndrangheta and the power structures, it becomes clear that it is not a single enterprise that holds a monopoly over a whole market. The 'ndrine with governance over the Gioia Tauro port are very important in the whole of the 'Ndrangheta and the Italian cocaine market and it is important to look at the role that they play, mainly the *Piomalli 'ndrina*.

6.3.1 The Piana's rise to Aristocracy

Leader of the 'ndrine from the *Piana* was the *Piomalli 'ndrina* from Gioia Tauro which in the 1990's was led by Girolamo *Mommo* Piomalli (de Boer, 2020; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009). Anna Sergi visualized the influence of the *Piana 'ndrine* like the *Piomalli* by explaining the rise to aristocracy of the *Mancuso 'ndrina* from *Vibo Valentia* by working together with the *Piomalli*:

“Apart from the last one *Luigi [Mancuso]*, in the nineties has an important friend and he has been getting along with a man name *Mommo Piromalli*. *Mommo Piromalli* is the quintessential head of the Ndrangheta in the nineties. There is no one above him, no one else. He is the one who talks with Cosa Nostra, he is the one who talks to everyone. And they are from Gioia Tauro. So the *Piromalli* are investing heavily in those years in a number of infrastructure projects, legal. Well, I mean, their projects are legal. Their investments are not. These involve the port, these involved motorway. It involves everything that goes around the infrastructure of the area.

[...]

So it's the time when [*Mommo*] *Piromalli* has contacts with Sicily. The Sicilian Mafia is going down the toilet. It's the whole point after Falcone, you know, they are out of the question. So the money that the *Piromalli* made, not just the *Piromalli* but the Ndrangheta from the area made, is a lot. The kidnappings and the local extortion gets invested in cocaine. *Mancuso* manages to, through one of his main brokers, who was *Barbieri* at the time, to send his people out to, at the time, Colombia.

[...]

So the moment [*Luigi*]*Mancuso*, the *Mancuso*, let's say business flourished, the reason why it could flourish in the very beginning was because behind them was *Piromalli*.

[...]

So *Piromalli* was the one that talked to the already well-oiled trafficking routes that were the same that we used to use for well, Cosa Nostra used to use for tobacco. And heroin is a bit different. But, you know, it was the tobacco routes, the heroin routes, whichever routes. '*And the reason why you can trust us with this new commodity is because I am Piromalli.*' And *Piromalli* means I'm in touch with the *Graviano brothers* in Palermo. I'm in touch with, *Toto Riina* when he was around. I am the boss of the 'Ndrangheta at the time (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022)."

Like with the *Plati* 'ndrine and the *Sidernesì*, the *Piromalli* grew to 'Ndrangheta aristocracy by their impact and success in the entrepreneurial dimension of the 'Ndrangheta activities. The brand name of the *Piromalli* became so important in the cocaine market that being connected to the *Piromalli* and especially to *Mommo* was a brand name in of itself. The 'ndrine from the *Piana* became almost as powerful as the ancient 'Ndrangheta clans from *San Luca* and *Plati* as the port of Gioia Tauro became the most important entry point of cocaine for the 'Ndrangheta and Europe. It is claimed that 80% of the cocaine on the Italian market was imported via Gioia Tauro (Global Initiative & InSight Crime, 2021; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009; Saviano, 2015). The 'ndrine from the *Piana* were involved in all of this, they controlled the routes but also let 'ndrine from other parts of Calabria use the port while taking a cut (Cicone, 2014; de Boer, 2020; *Gazzetta del Sud*, 2022; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009). Like explained before, the 'ndrine migrated all along the cocaine routes, but the entry point into Europe was in their own

home region so the ‘ndrine from the Tyrrhenian coast were always involved in the cocaine *consorzi* of that time:

“If there is a family, let’s say the *Alvaros*, who has a shipment coming into Gioia Tauro, it’s not them who can get it out, so they have to ask ... they must ask someone who is already inside, and they pay around 20%, either in cash or in cocaine ...” (Sergi, 2022, p. 167).

This governance over the main cocaine entry point for the ‘Ndrangheta made the ‘ndrine from the *Piana* aristocratic forces in the ‘Ndrangheta, this status for ‘ndrine like the *Piomalli* will last as long as the ‘Ndrangheta exists. This however is a nuancing of the idea that the ‘Ndrangheta is the monopolizing actor in the Italian cocaine market. The role of governing actor in the main entry point for the ‘Ndrangheta being the ‘ndrine from the *Piana* and most importantly the *Piomalli* ‘ndrina, is much different than a complete enterprise like organization that holds 80% of the cocaine imported into Italy. However, the focus of Italian law enforcement on Italy and the way that Italy has become indistinguishable from Europe overestimates the role of the ‘Ndrangheta and the *Piomalli* even more (E5, personal communication, May 3, 2022; E7, personal communication, May 24, 2022; E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022). Italian *moral entrepreneurs* debate that 80% of the cocaine in the European market is imported via Gioia Tauro, there is no numerical evidence for this: looking at the seizures from 2010 until 2020, Italy has been seeing cocaine seizures that are maximum around 7% of the cocaine seized in Europe (EMCDDA, 2021, 2022; Eurispes, 2012; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009, 2010; Saviano, 2015, 2016; UNODC & Europol, 2021).

Figure 6.4: Cocaine seizures in Europe 2010-2020

Quantity seized	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Belgium	6.84	8	19.18	6.49	9.29	17.49	30.29	44.75	53.03	65.25	70.25
Netherlands	10	10	10	12.35	8.76	12.01	12.01	14.63	40.13	43.84	48.89
Spain	25.24	16.61	20.75	26.7	21.69	21.62	15.63	40.96	48.45	37.87	36.89
Italy	3.84	6.34	5.3	4.97	3.87	4.04	4.14	4.08	3.62	8.24	13.43
France	4.13	10.83	5.6	5.61	6.88	10.87	8.53	17.5	16.36	15.76	13.15
Other countries	8.35	7.61	7.38	6.12	7.98	11.95	7.79	14.44	14.41	31.53	31.98

Source (EMCDDA, 2021)

6.3.2 Nothing lasts forever

However the dominance for the 'Ndrangheta of the entry point of Gioia Tauro, even if the scale was smaller than constructed, became less after approximately ten years. This meant that the 'ndrine had to switch to use other European ports as the entry point to Europe for their cocaine.

“So for years Gioia Tauro made it possible to have a unique, unique situation that no other group has ever had in Europe which was to import where you finance, it doesn't happen anymore because now they import in Antwerp, they had to change because obviously the routes change. Gioia Tauro went down in the legal trade, they went bankrupt, so it wasn't viable anymore. So they had to go to Genova, then Antwerp and Rotterdam, whatever happens (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022).”

The port of Gioia Tauro was becoming less interesting for the trafficking of cocaine. The reason for this was a combination of the huge amounts of cocaine that were trafficked through the port and the subsequent stronger presence of law enforcement to combat this (Global Initiative & InSight Crime, 2021; UNODC & Europol, 2021). This was not only related to the mafia embeddedness in the port, but had a real macro-economic reason as well. Anna Sergi alluded to this, but what was the reason for this 'bankruptcy'?

“From 2008 onwards, the port of Gioia Tauro has shown signs of loss of competitiveness, due both to the opening of new ports that have superior logistical advantages, and to a number of other economic and social factors that permits to individuate as third generation ports. Compared to 2010, the transshipment activity of the port of Gioia Tauro recorded a decrease of about 19% in 2011, essentially due to the abandonment of the port by the Maersk group, the Danish company that alone handled about a quarter of all port volume of container traffic and which has moved its ships to Port Said and Tangier Med (Russo & Chilà, 2021, pp. 12–13).”

This loss of competitiveness of the port within the European legal context had real effects on the loss of competitiveness of the port within the European illegal context. Although there are plans to help the port to gain back some of their competitiveness in the future, the role of 'mafia port' where the 'ndrine were so tightly embedded that they could smuggle cocaine as easily as in the past seems to be history (Russo & Chilà, 2021; UNODC & Europol, 2021). It has been noted that some of the local 'ndrine have changed their modus operandi by changing back to the drop-off method to elude law enforcement in the port (Mobsters Inc., 2022; A. Sergi, personal communication, May 26, 2022; Sergi, 2021). However, the dominant force for the 'Ndrangheta that Gioia Tauro was in the past, it will not become as easily again. The 'ndrine had to look for other entry points for cocaine into Europe and found them in the busiest ports of Europe: Rotterdam and Antwerp. Rotterdam and Antwerp had been important entry points for cocaine for some time now and the 'ndrine had been using them as well, but their modus operandi was different than in Gioia Tauro. The role of Antwerp and Rotterdam will

be discussed in the next chapter, in which I will discuss the Dutch cocaine market and how Antwerp and the Belgian market are closely related. The role of the Dutch cocaine market is more a transit market for the 'Ndrangheta, in which they do not control street level retail. However the role of transit country is only as important when there are retail regions to which this cocaine can be trafficked to.

The idea of Gioia Tauro being the most important entry point for cocaine in Italy is still propagated by Italian law enforcement. The focus of law enforcement on cocaine import is not only based on the difficulty to investigate the middle-market, but also has real consequences for the knowledge on the market as a whole. The fact that Italian law enforcement focuses on the import of cocaine in ports like Gioia Tauro, focuses the perceived importance of Gioia Tauro even if it may have declined in importance. This is combined with the idea that the 'Ndrangheta is still the most important actor when it comes to the cocaine market in Europe, which could be the case. However, the discussion is muddled by the focus on Italy being relayed to the rest of Europe as well by the *moral entrepreneurs*.

6.4 Reaching your customer

As discussed in Chapter 5, the transplantation to other parts of Italy has been crucial for the 'Ndrangheta to have control over a retail market. The focus of the 'Ndrangheta is mostly on governing markets and that can be done to differing degrees with differing types of governance. The first of these is that by controlling the import of cocaine into Europe, the 'ndrine could exercise governance over the market by being the major wholesale distributors in Europe. This is the role that was ascribed to the port of Gioia Tauro and the 'ndrine's control over it (E7, personal communication, May 24, 2022; E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022). Whether they have actually ever succeeded in having this role in Europe is still discussed, however the fact that they do not have this role in contemporary times has been proven by multiple investigations (EMCDDA, 2021, 2022; UNODC & Europol, 2021). A different type of governance over a market can be achieved by governing the retail market in different regions in Europe. Varese states that mafias exercise governance over illegal markets can be seen as being a supervisory organization that exercises the role of the state in an illegal market while not participating in it (E7, personal communication, May 24, 2022; Varese, 2006, 2014). This is comparable with what was seen in a research of Stefano Becucci:

“Just as immigrants present in Italy tend to perform tasks that are poorly paid, dangerous and undesired by the local population, foreigners operating in the underworld hold jobs that are just as risky and unprofitable. Italian organized crime groups put foreigners in charge of managing drug dealing areas, using them as unskilled criminal labour.

[...]

Definitively speaking, the contribution represented by foreign criminal groups could be seen in many cases as a functional specialization determined by the demand for a criminal “labour force” that is not satisfied by associates from indigenous organizations as they prefer directing their interests toward more profitable activities or managing illegal international trafficking from a higher, supervisory position (Becucci, 2004, p. 261).”

The ‘ndrine active in cities like Milan have stopped dealing the cocaine on the street themselves because of the risks involved and use a system of *delocalization* in which they use local or foreign organized crime groups to deal the cocaine at retail level. The supply of the cocaine is controlled by the ‘ndrine and therefore the governance over the market. This middle-market is also where the profits of the cocaine market are the biggest, the wholesale import and distribution phase can see mark-ups of 200% or more: *an initial investment of 200,000 euros (that is, total costs) to import 1250 kilos of cocaine from South America produces net profits of 3,550,000 euros (3000 euros for each kilo successfully imported)* (Terenghi, 2020, p. 16). So not only is the ‘ndrine’s profit the highest when operating as wholesale distributors, but they can also exercise governance over the market by having the choice in supplying groups in the retail market. There are differences in region in Italy when looking at the way the ‘ndrine exercise governance. In Milan and other big cities like Rome the retail level groups are mostly autonomous except for their connections to the suppliers. However, going further south in Italy like in the region of Calabria the ‘ndrine do exercise more direct control (Becucci, 2004; Franceschi, 2018). In Germany the same sort of landscape at retail level can be perceived, in which the transplanted ‘ndrine are more involved in the supply of the cocaine using local groups to deal cocaine at retail level (Sciarrone & Storti, 2014; Sergi & Rizzuti, 2021). When looking at the *consorzi* system that is used by the ‘ndrine to operate in the market, there are specific ‘ndrine that occupy the role of distributors to these regions and ‘ndrine that control the retail markets (Calderoni, 2012). The difference between Germany and Italy is that Italy is more perceived as a pure region of retail and Germany is a region where cocaine also gets distributed but primarily has a strong role as transit country to other regions in Europe (Sciarrone & Storti, 2014).

I do believe that the ‘Ndrangheta can operate as a governing actor on the retail market in Italy. The longevity of their presence in cities like Milan and their more effective way of structuring in relation to other street level groups, combined with their international presence gives them the power to act as

a *traditional mafia* over the retail market. However, once again the fact that the 'Ndrangheta has migrated to other countries in Europe (in various manners) does not mean that they have the same power everywhere. Their control over the northern Italian retail market cannot be substituted in the rest of Europe. Even though the 'ndrine have transplanted their structure in countries like Germany. They may have an important role in the distribution to local groups in Germany and therefore have governing power over the retail market there, but this would again not be a monopoly garnered by the whole of the organization.

6.5 Concluding remarks

This means that when looking at the European cocaine market that the 'ndrine are involved in, the role of the 'Ndrangheta in the market is mostly based on the wholesale distribution stage. The 'Ndrangheta operates in the *oligopolistic sector* that, even though it has seen severe fragmentation, is less violent and gains more profits for the 'ndrine involved. The use of the *consorzi* system in which roles in the temporary network based system are allocated according to aristocratic standing and monetary capabilities, makes it difficult for law enforcement to investigate properly and possible for 'one organization' to exercise power in multiple stages and locations of the market. The historical connections in Latin America still make it possible for the 'Ndrangheta to import cocaine directly from Latin America. Whenever cocaine routes go along different regions like West-Africa the 'ndrine do have smaller bases of operations to have control over the route. The most dominant route that cocaine travels from entry point can be visualized as a south-eastern vector. The entry points of Antwerp and Rotterdam have become even more dominant for the 'ndrine and from those entry points the cocaine travels mostly through Western-Germany to retail markets in Italy. Along the way the 'ndrine have a role as mid-level distributors and governing actors within some retail markets, but the most dominant markets remain in Italy.

The idea however that there is one organization that holds a monopoly over the whole European cocaine market, from import to retail market, is in my eyes a fallacy that is created by Italian law enforcement and other moral entrepreneurs. The focus on Italy which is created by the fact that the most important voices do not speak English and are focused on the import of cocaine into Gioia Tauro, as it is the port most directly controlled by the 'Ndrangheta. These ideas cannot be taken into totality for the whole of the European market just because of mafia migration into other countries in Europe and Latin America. The fact that these *moral entrepreneurs* frame the market in this way means that less informed public media from all over Europe take this frame and run with it. This creates fallacies in the believe system about the whole of the European cocaine market in more countries than just Italy.

Chapter 7: The Netherlands and the ‘Ndrangheta. A match made in Heaven?

“Just because we didn’t lose, doesn’t mean we won.”

(Bennet, 2022)

In this chapter I will discuss the integration of the ‘Ndrangheta in the Dutch cocaine market. In the preceding chapters I have discussed the ‘Ndrangheta as an organization, its migration and role in the European cocaine market. In this chapter I will focus on the way that those factors have come together and how that affects the way that the ‘Ndrangheta migrated to the Netherlands. In this chapter I aim to answer the fourth sub-question of RQ1:

What is the nature of ‘Ndrangheta migration and involvement in the Dutch cocaine market since 2006?

To answer this question I will focus on three major cases of ‘Ndrangheta involvement within the Dutch cocaine market and the way that these cases shape the understanding of ‘Ndrangheta involvement in the market. I will start the chapter however, by looking at the most important report made by Dutch law enforcement on the ‘Ndrangheta. This report and the history behind the writing of the report is important to note before discussing the three cases, as it will be used as the backdrop of the discourse analysis in this chapter. The Dutch cocaine market is one of the most important import and transit-markets of cocaine in Europe. This is mostly because of the presence of three major entry points of cocaine in the Netherlands and Belgium, along with other minor entry points. These locations are the ports of Rotterdam and Antwerp and Schiphol Airport. There are other ports in the Netherlands and Belgium that play roles as entry points, like Amsterdam and Vlissingen, but their impact is much less significant than Antwerp and Rotterdam. Besides the entry points there is another important location which has been named in the media as the ‘cocaine roundabout of Europe’ or the ‘conference room of criminal Europe’, which is Amsterdam. Amsterdam is an important location, not as much as an entry point but more as a meeting point and location for ‘Ndranghetisti to flee to. However in line with Amsterdam, I will look at the Randstad in broader terms as a location for fleeing ‘Ndranghetisti and as a meeting point. These three locations come together to form the chain used for cocaine to get imported into the Netherlands. After the importation of cocaine one of the major contributing reason for the surge in cocaine imported to the Netherlands is the good logistical network that characterizes the Dutch transit-market. I will use one primary example of the integration of ‘Ndrangheta into the legal logistical network of the Netherlands being the Royal Flora Holland in Aalsmeer. After this I will look at the ‘Dutch hinterland’ and see how the ‘Ndrangheta migrated and integrated here.

By looking at these factors from the eye of 'Ndrangheta integration into important locations in the Netherlands I hope to paint a clear picture of how the 'Ndrangheta has integrated into the Netherlands. Lastly I will discuss the Modus Operandi of the 'Ndrangheta in the Netherlands, which is comparable with the Modus Operandi discussed in Chapter 6, to see the struggles of the Dutch law enforcement in investigating the 'Ndrangheta in the Netherlands. These struggles have had an important impact in the way that discourse has evolved.

7.1 Geopolitical tensions and its effect on discourse

I have focused my discourse analysis on reports by Italian law enforcement and papers and books that were written on the basis of these reports. A perfect example of the tension between Italian law enforcement and the way that their discursive power has real executive consequences for Dutch law enforcement is the publication of the Dutch report on the Italian mafia in the Netherlands called *Cerca Trova*.³⁸ The findings of this report started two operations and the formation of the Dutch Anti-Mafia team:

E4: Well, considering *Cerca Trova* and the recommendation of *Cerca Trova* at the time, that did shock the government quite a bit: oh, there is quite a bit of presence, only in nature and extent we can't quite interpret it. It was then decided at ministerial level: police go do something with this. So that is actually the reason that the Anti-Mafia team, as a target group approach were established and still exist. So that started there 2017. *Cerca Trova* was also a collaboration between police and FIOD and some other parties, among others, and that's what the team is. So also police and FIOD, so it also answers to police and FIOD and it started in 2017 as a kind of flex group. It consists of about 10 colleagues from FIOD and police. It is actually a kind of work preparation analysis club, expertise club, so.

J.B.S.: Because *Cerca Trova* was also written, of course, actually a little bit under pressure from the Italian government. But is that still there? If you read *Cerca Trova* also, you read in the statistics that the Italian government is pushing investigations very much. But then is that still the case that really still a lot from Italy is fed and the pressure comes from there?

E4: What you see is that quite a lot of information went back and forth, but went between the rails, on the Dutch side, because we didn't prioritize target group and because the target group wasn't necessarily high on the list. Because we are now since five years, that makes that we have been able to catch quite a few things, so the Italian government is more favorably disposed towards the way we are now dealing with the theme of awareness and also following up more. What is the case, but that's actually a bit of a shift, Italian government is still very outspoken about the Netherlands, but actually now has their eyes, I don't want to call it a broken record, but it's kind of a running message, very focused, precisely on *Mocromaffia* and said: pay attention, your *Mocromaffia* is the club that, or at least

³⁸ Italian for: Seek and you will find

not the same club, but is now going through the same development that we ourselves experienced in the 80s and 90s. So they are not so much on: Do you guys still do anything with Italian mafia? We have, I think, managed to convince them enough now that we do (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022).”

There is geopolitical pressure from Italy on the front of law enforcement to make sure the rest of Europe does its due on the ‘Ndrangheta. This pressure is also visible in the way that Italian moral entrepreneurs are responsible for the way the ‘Ndrangheta is seen, as they are the pressuring group. This excess of ‘knowledge’ on the ‘Ndrangheta is used to make other parties in Europe aware of the problem, only with the flip side of using a simplified version of the truth to pressure others in doing what the Italians deem as enough. I have focused on the result of the discursive power of these groups, but in this example the reason behind this pressure can be extracted.

7.2 Dutch Fixers

In the Netherlands there is a system of networks with a multi-national/multi-ethnic character that is embedded in Dutch organized crime, the ports and the distribution chains. These groups have varying historical and migratory backgrounds to how they have started in the cocaine market and these groups have been in the news for the violence they have caused in the public sphere (*KLPD - Dienst Nationale Recherche*, 2012; Laumans & Schrijver, 2014; Tops & Tromp, 2017; Tromp & Tops, 2020). However this violence can mostly be attributed to deals gone wrong, batches stolen and territorial disputes in the retail market. Their role in the oligopolistic sector is mostly that of wholesale importer, which is used by the ‘Ndrangheta in a process of *delocalization*. Or as Anna Sergi explains, as fixers:

“E8: Cocaine is something that everyone can do: if I have money and I decide to invest in cocaine because I know someone in Cartagena [for example]

[...]

E8: Because it's the same thing when, I don't know if you heard this, but when journalists go abroad. They hire fixers. It's the same exact thing. You are from deep down the Aspromonte region. You know that you are getting cocaine in Antwerp. You don't even know how to spell Antwerp most of the time, so it's like, who the fuck do I know? And that's where the diaspora comes in. So you call someone back there who speaks the language, Dutch or Flemish or whichever it is, and they can put you in touch with someone. Okay. And then they put you in touch with someone. And then you hire a fixer. You pay for that person to solve your to fix him (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022).”

This is where these local groups play a significant role for the ‘Ndrangheta, they are the fixers because they have the contacts in the ports. Koen Voskuil claimed that these local groups had to have different groups to have a hallmark associated with them, that is the reason that these groups would have

wanted to work with them in the first place. The power of the 'Ndrangheta brand meant that cooperating with the 'Ndrangheta opened doors in Latin America (E6, personal communication, May 12, 2022). This process of *delocalization* was perfect for the 'Ndrangheta as they could not operate on foreign territory and for local groups because of the 'Ndrangheta brand (Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c). A side effect for law enforcement is the way that the 'Ndrangheta was distanced because of this process made it more difficult to investigate the organization (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022; *KLPD*, 2011; *Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie*, 2017). The difficulty with investigating the role that the 'Ndrangheta has in the distribution after the use of locally embedded groups is two-fold: first there is the fact that this middle-market is very difficult to investigate and has been the least investigated section of the drug market (Pearson & Hobbs, 2001). There are practical issues that arise for law enforcement when investigating the middle-market distribution of cocaine:

“So the problem is they have is when they get sight of a shed with 1,000 kilos of cocaine. They are not allowed to let cocaine through so they have to get in immediately. So they don't get the opportunity to see, what would happen to that thousand kilos? Where would it go? And then what you are going to see, I think, is that if you have 1,000 or 2,000 kilos then there are groups that sell that abroad, 300 kilos goes to Germany, goes to Italy, 100 kilos goes to Amsterdam, somewhere in Eindhoven someone wants 30, and so on and so forth. Only police can't track that. They are not allowed to...

[...]

It has been explained to me: if I have a kilo or two kilos there and there is knowing that there are 20 couriers attached to that house, so I have to have 20 observation teams to follow all those couriers. Well I don't have those, so what do I do: I swoop in (E2, personal communication, April 12, 2022).”

Second there is the fact that because of the lack of pressure for a long time in the Netherlands, the groups that would have been used as fixers have had the time to grow into independent organizations: *once you are big and you have your own line and you are trusted, because you have done business with each other up to 10 times, you yourself have become the hallmark of quality* (E1, personal communication, September 29, 2021a). This has also meant a change in the role of the 'Ndrangheta, as seen by the Dutch National Police:

“I think that is the role that is often fulfilled for our target group in the Netherlands. What we also often see is a very strong connection, more and more towards the source countries whereby they reside in the Netherlands, but also have their relationship with the source country and also have their relationship with the market further down the line. Because we don't look into it, we have no insight into this and Italy does this less, obviously, but what we also often see is that the people who play this role often also enter into relationships, as in: marry Columbian, Brazilian women, because then you get that familial bond, often are fluent in Spanish or Portuguese....

[...]

So I think, where maybe five years ago we would have said: yes, they have a role from here to get it further into Europe, I think we have to adjust that to: they are really here as a middle man between source country and retail country. And we also do often have a role where they really do get involved from source to retail market (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022)."

Like explained in chapter 6, the 'ndrine have distanced themselves more from the cocaine itself. This can be seen as an evolution of the 'ndrine and their role in the whole of the chain or as a consequence of the evolution of Dutch networks. However the fact that the 'ndrine have used delocalization can also be seen as a deliberate choice when the *demand for illegal governance* over the port has been filled by local groups who have been embedded in the ports for longer periods of time (Sergi, 2021; Varese, 2011, 2020). The 'ndrine active in the Netherlands cannot focus on the *traditional mafia dimension* because of the lack of *demand for criminal governance* (E7, personal communication, May 24, 2022; Varese, 2014, 2020). With the decrease of dominance of the port of Gioia Tauro and the growth of the Dutch cocaine market in the whole of Europe this seems like a logical consequence. The way that the 'ndrine have migrated to the Netherlands and their involvement in the middle-market can be investigated when looking at locations where 'Ndranghetisti have been arrested and the reasons of the individual migration of respective 'Ndranghetisti. The structure of the 'ndrine in the Netherlands is based on the focus on the *entrepreneurial mafia dimension*, looking more like fluid networks like the *consorzi* (Sciarrone & Storti, 2014; Varese, 2020). This is confirmed in my interviews where it became clear that there is no clan formation or forms of *transplantation* in the Netherlands (E1, personal communication, September 29, 2021a; E3, personal communication, April 4, 2022; E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022; E5, personal communication, May 3, 2022; E7, personal communication, May 24, 2022). This is in contrast to what the Anti-drug force of Italy says:

"With regard to Europe, it was demonstrated that the 'Ndrangheta is well-rooted in Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium where it directly runs the arrival, storage and distribution of cocaine through local branches (DCSA, 2021, p. 36)."

This contrasts what Dutch police, journalists and criminologists say in regards to the manner of migration and direct involvement in the cocaine market in the Netherlands. I have not found any examples of 'ndrine being directly involved in the importation of cocaine in the Netherlands in my interviews and my literature analysis. The idea that the 'Ndrangheta is directly involved is once again an Italian minded view that is used to frame the whole of the European market. The fact that there are 'Ndranghetisti involved in the Dutch cocaine market does not necessarily mean that they control the market in the Netherlands, but this view is still propagated by Italian law enforcement.

7.3 The Randstad as the middle of the market

The mayor of Antwerp Bart de Wever said in the Dutch talk show OP1 that where Rotterdam and Antwerp were the arms and legs of the Dutch cocaine market, then Amsterdam was the head (OP1, 2021). Amsterdam has also been called the conference room of criminal Europe (*Amsterdamse Driehoek*, 2021; *De Volkskrant*, 2019). The picture that Amsterdam is the central place of business for much of the cocaine trade in Europe is painted in the media. The role of Amsterdam in the middle-market of the cocaine market as a meeting place is discussed by multiple criminologists, journalists and research institutions (*Amsterdamse Driehoek*, 2021; *Bureau Beke*, 2021; EMCDDA, 2021; Eski, 2021; Eski *et al.*, 2022; Fijnaut & Bovenkerk, 1996; Korf *et al.*, 2006; Laumans & Schrijver, 2014; Leistra, 2020; Middeleer *et al.*, 2018; Tops & Tromp, 2017; Tromp & Tops, 2020; Werdmölder, 2021, 2022; Zaitch, 2002). This has multiple reasons, like the image of being a generally nice city to stay:

“I then just relate it to my target audience [Italian Mafia] and then I think: Yes. It is of course a logistically convenient place, so often the place where people arrive when they travel there. It has, I think, also to do with a piece of image, Amsterdam is also just a nice city for criminals to be in for a while, to live in. So that also attracts them and of course there is a fair amount of anonymity in Amsterdam. It's just very easy to move around without anyone wondering what you're doing. So that's attractive. Um yes, what does that mean? That they don't do that in other places? Yes, I think that, in Rotterdam it will also happen, but yes, if you had to compare, I think that the target group [‘Ndrangheta] we are talking about, that maybe they don't even move that much in Rotterdam, because they are too close to the buy. I think they always build some layers in between to make sure that that distance remains (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022).”

This ‘nice place to stay’, with lots of things to do and being sufficiently distanced from the cocaine itself is not only attractive for the ‘Ndrangheta but also has been the major location for Dutch organized crime. Amsterdam is not only the capital of the Netherlands, but also the media’s capital of Dutch organized crime. This has been historically connected to the great boom of coffeeshops and the illegal money that was earned with that by the semi-legality of the *gedoogbeleid* and the multiculturalism of the city (*Amsterdamse Driehoek*, 2021; Middeleer *et al.*, 2018; Tops & Tromp, 2017; Tromp & Tops, 2020; Werdmölder, 2022). It is important to be critical of the reasons why this may have been bloated:

“Look, you have quite a large group of Rotterdam criminals, for example, only.... Yes, that's a curious phenomenon I can't quite put my finger on either. The media have had a bias towards the capital for a very long time. And that has partly to do with the fact that so conflicts here get a lot of attention. Yes, I don't know if that's because the newspapers are here or what that is. I don't know that very well, but it is. But if you look at the role, so let's say if you look at the role of the logistical economy and then... [you have to conclude] Amsterdam is not in the route at all then....(E2, personal communication, April 12, 2022)”

The fact that Amsterdam is seen as the most dominant logistical center for organized crime may have been a bloated frame. However, there have not been a lot of arrests in the Rotterdam area connected to the 'Ndrangheta. Cementing the fact that they are not, in contrast to Italian law enforcement's view, directly involved in the import. The fact that Amsterdam is not in the route could even be an advantage, distancing the business done in Amsterdam with the product itself. So looking at the claim of Jan Meeus, I think personally that the fact that Amsterdam is distanced from the logistical network makes Amsterdam an even better place to do business for the 'ndrine. This has been confirmed in my interviews, 'Ndranghetisti are said to travel to Amsterdam for conducting business as the criminal underworld is centered there (E1, personal communication, September 29, 2021a; E3, personal communication, April 4, 2022; E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022). It is an international city where people can have an anonymous lifestyles and has historically been an important location for Dutch organized crime (E2, personal communication, April 12, 2022; E5, personal communication, May 3, 2022; KLPD, 2011; Laumans & Schrijver, 2014; *Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie*, 2017; Werdmölder, 2021, 2022). Seeing Amsterdam as the meeting location for organized crime in the Netherlands, the reasons for the 'ndrine to come to Amsterdam would be to organize meetings with other criminals. When the 'ndrine would use *delocalization*, the dominant place to connect with the local criminal organizations would be Amsterdam and the Randstad.

7.4 Three examples

It can be confirmed that Amsterdam is a proven place of refuge for 'Ndranghetisti, some of which have been active in the cocaine trade. Only most of the 'Ndranghetisti that were arrested in the Amsterdam region (or the Netherlands in general) have been arrested because of international arrest warrants from Italy, mostly because of criminal convictions and suspicions in Italy (KLPD, 2011; *Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie*, 2017). The 'Ndranghetisti that are arrested here are convicted in Italy for crimes that they have committed outside of the Netherlands. The problem with this is that there is little knowledge of what criminal acts were committed on Dutch soil (E1, personal communication, September 29, 2021a; E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022; *Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie*, 2017). This means that it is mostly guessing work when looking at the cases which I will discuss. When looking at these three cases it becomes possible to look at the reasons for mafia migration to the Netherlands and therefore the type of mafia migration seen in the Netherlands. The first example is the migration of individuals linked to one of the oldest and most powerful 'ndrine from San Luca: the *Nirta-Strangio 'ndrina*. This example is indicative of the role that the Randstad plays as a center of refuge and logistics for 'ndrine involved in cocaine trafficking. However, this example is not indicative of the manner of logistical processes used by the 'ndrine and the routes used for cocaine trafficking itself. The second example is indicative of the way that 'ndrine make use of the legal infrastructure to

hide cocaine trafficking and the funds gathered from this activity. It is the most exceptional example and can therefore not be used to explain the whole of cocaine trafficking structures used in the Netherlands by the 'Ndrangheta. The third example is the best example of explaining the whole of these structures and will therefore be the most fleshed out example of the three. The third example combines the examples of mafia mobility explained in chapter 5, the role of consorzi in the trafficking of cocaine like in chapter 6 and the 'Ndrangheta aristocracy and culture from chapter 4.

7.4.1 The Nirta-Strangio's: Family Matters

One instance of the use of the anonymity of Amsterdam is one of the best examples of the European migration of 'Ndrangheta. On the 12 March 2009 Giovanni Strangio was arrested in Diemen, a suburb of Amsterdam (de Boer, 2020; E3, personal communication, April 4, 2022). Giovanni was one of the masterminds and killers behind the *Strage di Duisburg*, where 6 'Ndranghetisti were assassinated in front of restaurant Da Bruno (de Boer, 2020; DIA, 2008; Strill.it, 2007). The other killer, Sebastiano Nirta was arrested in 2010 in San Luca and was convicted together with Giovanni Strangio for the assassination (de Boer, 2020; *Gazetta del Sud*, 2011). Giovanni Strangio was living in Diemen with his wife and son. He had been living there for around one and a half years. Staying in the same flat was Francesco Romeo³⁹, his brother in law, who was convicted in Italy for 'Ndrangheta membership and cocaine trafficking (de Boer, 2020, p. 177). An important *pentito* Giorgio Basile, an ex-'Ndranghetista who lived in Germany and had dealings in the Netherlands in the 1980's and 1990's, had predicted that the hitmen would have immediately fled from Duisburg to the Netherlands (de Jong & Voskuil, 2017; E1, personal communication, September 29, 2021a; Ulrich, 2009). In the apartment that Giovanni Strangio was living the police found three false passports, a bullet-proof vest, three wigs, eleven mobile phones, a half million euro's in cash, a money counting machine and a loaded gun next to the door (de Boer, 2020, p. 32). Giovanni Strangio had owned a pizzeria in Kaarst, named San Michele after the patron saint of the 'Ndrangheta, and had worked in another Pizzeria in Kaarst called Toni's Pizza (DIA, 2007; *Gerechtshof Amsterdam*, 2013). He argued that he had earned the cash with the sale of the pizzeria.

Figure 7.1: Giovanni Strangio photographed by Dutch Police on the 6th of March 2009



Source (*La Repubblica*, 2010)

³⁹ While Francesco Romeo bears the same surname as the Pelle-Vottari-Romeo 'ndrina, which were the receiving side of Giovanni Strangio's assassination in Duisburg, Francesco Romeo is part of the Nirta-Strangio 'ndrina. Francesco Romeo was married to Teresa Strangio, the sister of Giovanni Strangio.

He and his family argue that Giovanni was arrested and convicted on the sole basis of his surname, but his DNA was found in the getaway car that was filmed by the security camera's at restaurant Da Bruno (de Boer, 2020; Facebook, 2009; *Gazetta del Sud*, 2011; *Gerechtshof Amsterdam*, 2013; *La Repubblica*, 2010). The car was found in Ghent, Belgium, which was an example of how the 'Ndrangheta uses borders to try and cover their tracks while traveling freely because of Schengen according to the Dutch National Police (KLPD, 2011).

Giovanni Strangio had been living in Diemen for a year and a half and had never raised suspicion from his neighbors, he was found by law enforcement because of the trips that his sisters took to bring food, money and weapons from San Luca to the Netherlands for their family members Giovanni Strangio and Giuseppe Nirta (KLPD, 2011). Giuseppe Nirta, the husband of Giovanni's sister Aurelia Strangio, was arrested in Amsterdam, he was convicted of cocaine trafficking and mafia membership (de Boer, 2020). The tracking of sisters phones by law enforcement made it so that Giuseppe Nirta, Francesco Romeo and Giovanni Strangio were arrested in Amsterdam and Diemen respectively in 2009. Giovanni Strangio was not suspected of participating in criminal behavior in the Netherlands. Giovanni Strangio and Sebastiano Nirta are both convicted to life in prison for their role in the Strage di Duisburg (E3, personal communication, April 4, 2022). Francesco Romeo and Giuseppe Nirta are both convicted of cocaine trafficking and mafia membership (DNA, 2012, 2016).

The murders in Duisburg were the conclusion of an almost twenty year old feud between the *Nirta-Strangio's* and the *Pelle-Vottari-Romeo's*, which started in 1991. On an evening of Carnival in San Luca in 1991 some young boys of the Nirta-Strangio's angered the Vottari family with an egg fight (de Boer, 2020; *De Telegraaf*, 2007; DIA, 2008; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009; Sauviller & Di Rosa, 2016; *Trouw*, 2007). One of these boys was the 17 year old Francesco Nirta (AD, 2007; de Boer, 2020; DIA, 2007;

La Repubblica, 2010). Francesco is the brother of Sebastiano Nirta. On the 20th of September 2013 Francesco Nirta was arrested in *Snackbar Galecop* in Nieuwegein, a suburb of Utrecht while eating fries with a Moroccan and two Dutch men (de Boer, 2020; DNA, 2014). He was arrested for his role in the feud, as he had been present in multiple steps of the feud. In his apartment the police found 40 kilos of cocaine and in the car of one of the other arrestees they found 18.000 euros. Because the focus of the investigation was not on the trafficking of cocaine, it is mostly unknown how the cocaine connections between Francesco and the other 3 men were (de Boer, 2020). The 40 kilos cocaine that were found did not get Francesco arrested for the trafficking of cocaine of possession of cocaine. This

Figure 7.2: Mugshot of Giovanni Strangio



Source (Bundeskriminalamt, 2008)

means that Dutch law enforcement handed Francesco Nirta over to Italian law enforcement and did not investigate further into his role in the cocaine market (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022)

This raises a question when looking at the number of arrests associated with the Nirta-Strangio's in the Netherlands: what is the manner of organization of the Nirta-Strangio's in the Netherlands? Can we see this as a form of *transplantation* or is it an organized form of *functional diversification* (Varese, 2020)? While there are multiple members of the *Nirta-Strangio 'ndrina* that were arrested in the Netherlands, there is no real evidence that they were involved in activities related to the *traditional mafia dimension* (Calderoni *et al.*, 2016b; Phillips, 2017). This is because there is no *demand for criminal governance* in the Netherlands. The 'ndrine that are present in the Netherlands have to contend in a country that has no real historical *demand for criminal governance* and small groups of Italian immigrants. These local conditions are the reason why there is no real transplanted structure visible in the Netherlands (Varese, 2014, 2020). The members had multiple reasons for staying in the Netherlands, mostly connected to the massacre in Duisburg. There are accounts of transplanted structures in the west of Germany and most of the 'ndrine active in the west of Germany are from the San Luca area (Bedetti & Dalponte, 2019; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016b; Sergi & Rizzuti, 2021). The reason for the *latitanti* in the Amsterdam region connected to the *Strage di Duisburg* is the proximity to West-Germany combined with the national borders which halted police investigations (Allum, 2014; Calderoni *et al.*, 2016b). Like explained in Chapter 5, the 'Ndrangheta does not see borders between Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands, while law enforcement is hindered by these borders. The Randstad being perfect for *latitanti* to seek refuge, being a location where anonymity is easily used. The activity of cocaine trafficking by other members is also an example of *functional diversification*, being more connected to the *entrepreneurial mafia dimension* (Morselli *et al.*, 2011; Phillips, 2017; Varese, 2011, 2020). This is why, when looking at the migration of the Nirta-Strangio 'ndrina, I strongly feel that this a form of *functional diversification* which is connected to the *transplantation* of the San Luca 'ndrine in the west of Germany (Varese, 2011, 2020).

7.4.2 The Royal Florists of Siderno

However, there are also examples of 'ndrine that have infiltrated logistical network in the Netherlands. Like explained, not only the scale of the ports is important for the importation and distribution of cocaine to the rest of Europe but also the logistical network. In the preceding paragraph I focused on the *Nirta-Strangio's* to explain the way that 'ndrine can use the Netherlands, and mostly the Randstad, as a place of refuge and meeting place for other criminals. In this paragraph I will focus on the infiltration of logistical networks by looking at the example of the infiltration by 'Ndrangheta in the *Royal Flora Holland*, the biggest flower auction in the world (Bureau Beke, 2021). I have deputed Sciarrone's concept of *infiltration* as it relates mostly to economic infiltration, this means that it does

not suffice in the whole of this thesis. However for this specific case the concept of *infiltration* is useful. Sciarrone focuses on the intentionality of migration and infiltration of legal businesses or markets with his concept *infiltration* (Sciarrone, 2019; Sciarrone & Storti, 2014). This is what happened with the infiltration of the Royal Flora Holland.

7.4.2.1 Fresh produce

Vincenzo Crupi was the owner of Fresh Export BV. and exported flowers from Aalsmeer to Siderno in Calabria. Vincenzo's parents were involved in the flower trade and in the 1980's he settled in the Netherlands with his flower business. He lived in the *Oranjewijk* in Aalsmeer, a very regular suburban neighborhood (de Boer, 2020). A business partner described Vincenzo Crupi like this in a podcast of the NPO:

"Gabriella Ader: According to John, Vincenzo Crupi, with whom he speaks English, does not look like a typical mafioso.

John van Tol: Then let me put it this way: if you are in that trade, you can wear the most expensive clothes that and well, it wasn't like that. The clothes he buys, those are rather *Zeeman*⁴⁰ stuff, the parents, they drove old cars, I emptied his house. Let me put it this way. I don't think the pawnbroker gives anything for it. (Starts chuckling out loud.)

Gabriella Ader: Vincenzo Crupi does have a chef in Aalsmeer who does Italian cooking for him, John used to go there to eat.

John van Tol: No bottles of Moët were opened there or anything.

Gabriella Ader: John explains that Vincenzo Crupi lives in a terraced house in Aalsmeer during the week. On weekends, he flies to his wife, near Rome or to Calabria where the family is from and partly still lives (NPO 1/ KRO NCRV, 2019)."

Vincenzo was, like Giovanni Strangio in a way, a very unassuming Italian who lived in the Netherlands. A regular citizen that had a flower business, not much more. Only Vincenzo was part of the 'Ndrangheta and he used the flower business as a front for his criminal business (de Boer, 2020; DIA, 2017a; DNA, 2016, 2016; NOS, 2019). Vincenzo had two brothers: Giuseppe and Rocco. Rocco Crupi was the owner of a flower distribution center in Latina, near Rome and Giuseppe was the owner of a flower wholesale business in Siderno. The whole family was from Siderno (de Boer, 2020; de Jong & Voskuil, 2017; Reuters, 2016; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c). Vincenzo was married to Concetta Macrì. She is the daughter of Antonio Macrì, the old Capo Crimine that was the *Capobastone* of the now-called *Commisso 'ndrina* and the Canadian *Siderno Group* (de Boer, 2020; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c). The *Crupi 'ndrina* is seen as

⁴⁰ The *Zeeman* is a very cheap clothing store in the Netherlands

a separate clan that functions under the arm of the *Commisso 'ndrina* (DNA, 2016). Like explained before, in Siderno everything moves under the guidance of the *super 'ndrina Commisso*.

The Crupi brothers used the flower business to traffic cocaine, among other crimes, from the Netherlands to Italy, with each shipment of flowers towards Calabria there were around 10 kilos of cocaine trafficked (DNA, 2016). The brothers controlled the whole supply chain from the Netherlands to Calabria in this way. This harrows back to what Anna Sergi explained about the scale of the *Sidernes* and their subsequent global control over the logistical network (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022). The strategy of trafficking in smaller shipments is called smurfing, every time a shipment would get seized it would be a small amount and therefore the risk would be minimized (*Bureau Beke*, 2021; E1, personal communication, September 29, 2021a; *Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie*, 2017). The Royal Flora Holland posed a fantastic opportunity for the brothers:

“E1: But it's so it is, it's hugely cluttered, it's super big, all business halls and I don't know what else we can do. There's also a whole shell around it of greenhouses and sheds and I don't know what so there's also all this transshipment of flowers. That. That's where it happens, you don't do that at the flower auction itself. But you do that in a shed just outside. There are 100,000 nationalities who come there, all day workers and I don't know what else. So you can't keep track of faces either, supervision is completely lacking, because compared to Schiphol there are two neighborhood policemen walking around.

J.B.S.: That's it? (fairly surprised)

E1: That's it. There is some security, also from flower auction but that's not very much either. There is no military police, there is no customs, so surveillance is many times smaller. There are billions involved. A lot of cash is traded, still. Of course, it is also nice if you are in the drugs business, because then you do have some cash to dispose of. Ehm so those flowers, they have to go somewhere. There is a whole distribution network which drives all over Europe. It's almost made for it.

J.B.S.: And then it also has to be fast, because those are fresh produce.

E1: Yes, exactly indeed, so there again the control is not as good (E1, personal communication, September 29, 2021a).”

The flower auction meant the perfect opportunity for the Crupi brothers. This example of *transit-crime* makes use of the opportunities that the Dutch logistical system offers (Ferwerda & Unger, 2016; Kleemans, 2007; Madarie & Kruisbergen, 2020; Van de Bunt *et al.*, 2014). It is a prime example of the *entrepreneurial mafia dimension* as it focuses only on the infiltration of a legal market in the pursuit of illegal transit-criminality (Dagnes *et al.*, 2020; Kleemans, 2007; Phillips, 2017; Sciarrone & Storti, 2014). There is no focus on criminal governance and there is no need for the *transplantation* of a mafia

structure (E7, personal communication, May 24, 2022; Varese, 2020). The Crupi brothers used a fluid and fairly small network because of the infiltration in the Royal Flora Holland and subsequent legal chain of transport. The problem for law enforcement is the perfect conditions for this criminality, like Koen Voskuil explains in the quote. If the logistical system allows this abuse in the pursuit of making it more attractive for legal businesses to flourish, the ability of law enforcement to investigate is diminished (Kleemans, 2007).

“E1: And what the Italians do very cleverly is that they do small batches, so that smurfing you can read. And once a lorry is caught somewhere at the border, yes, there are ten kilos under the seat, nobody gets excited about that and there is an eastern European behind the wheel. So then you don't immediately think of the Italian mafia either.

J.B.S: But is it worth going after that at all, every time those kilos while it's so difficult to get to the bottom of a flower auction?

E1: Look, so the point is when that report came out and that was sometime last year, then that mayor and they really made an appeal to the cabinet of: yes, look at this, money has to go to this as well because we have to set a high threshold for crime and I think that's what it takes. It's a sector that I think deals with 6 billion euros a year so it's huge. Ehm, yes, so I do think that if we want to get rid of the Netherlands as the main distribution country of cocaine in Europe, we have to seal up this kind of, we have to seal up the port of Rotterdam better and but then we also have to control these kinds of distribution hubs better (E1, personal communication, September 29, 2021a).”

Using frequent flower transports from Aalsmeer to Italy to smuggle cocaine. Vincenzo used an Albanian driver that would drive from Aalsmeer to Rotterdam to pick up a sports bag and then drive to Latina and Siderno. When the truck would return to the Netherlands the cash that was earned with the sale of the flowers and cocaine would be laundered by buying new flowers at the auction (De Boer, 2020; DNA, 2016). This was such a successful system that Vincenzo Crupi was not suspected of anything, his business Fresh Export BV. was in business for over ten years.

“The court documents allege that Crupi, Macri and others ran an organization “systematically and regularly dedicated to importing from Holland large quantities of cocaine to be sold on the Italian market.” They represented the international business side of the ‘Ndrangheta, say prosecutors, rather than being feared bosses ruling home turf through clan loyalty and intimidation (Reuters, 2016).”

In this quote from Reuters the example of the way that the Crupi’s personified the entrepreneurial dimension by focusing on making money and not on the governance over their region. The Crupi ‘ndrina was not part of the ‘Ndrangheta aristocracy, but had close ties with the Commisso ‘ndrina. Because of their longstanding history in the flower market they could infiltrate the market for criminal

objectives, using their *family dynasty* to connect with the aristocracy and infiltrate the legal market (Sergi, 2020a).

7.4.2.2 The Royal Tomato visits

The real end began with the combination of the Italian and Canadian *Operation Acero-Krupy*⁴¹ and the Dutch *Operation Levinius* (DNA, 2016). *Levinius* focused on the fraud and intimidation within the Royal Flora Holland by Italian mafiosi (*Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie*, 2017; NRC, 2019). *Operation Acero-Krupy* focused on the connections between the operations of the Crupi's within the cocaine trade and the connection with the 'Ndrangheta in the *Greater Toronto Area* (DNA, 2016; Sergi, 2022; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c). This cooperation resulted in the bugging of the office of Vincenzo Crupi in Aalsmeer, in which he met with his brother in law Vincenzo *U Pummadoru*⁴² Macrì. Vincenzo Macrì is the youngest son of Antonio Macrì. Vincenzo Macrì was convicted for cocaine trafficking in the United States (De Boer, 2020; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c). The bugging of the office made it clear to law enforcement that the *Sidernesì* had transplanted to Canada and that the *Siderno Group, Commisso 'ndrina* and the Crupi brothers were all part of one sub-organization of the 'Ndrangheta, in the form of one 'ndrina. Vincenzo Crupi had visited Canada to organize a truce between the Canadian mobsters after the murder of Carmine Verduci, a prominent figure in the Canadian 'Ndrangheta (de Boer, 2020; Sergi, 2022; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016b). This meeting and various other affairs like investing the laundered cocaine money in Canada, a load of stolen Lindt chocolate and the potential moving of Vincenzo Macrì to South-America for the purpose of cocaine trafficking were discussed in Aalsmeer (DNA, 2016). Vincenzo Macrì was arrested in Sao Paolo when trying to board a plane to Venezuela with a false passport (DNA, 2016; National Post, 2015; Toronto Star, 2021). In the overheard conversations with Crupi, Macrì already mentioned a preference for Venezuela over Colombia, which Crupi had insisted on (de Boer, 2020, p. 191). It became clear that Vincenzo Crupi was not only the owner of a flower business in Aalsmeer, but an important pivot for the *Sidernesì* on multiple fronts and in the highest echelons of the 'Ndrangheta.

Figure 7.3: Vincenzo Crupi (left) and Vincenzo 'Pummadoru' Macrì (right)



Source (Reuters, 2016)

⁴¹ *Acero* means 'Maple' in Italian and *Krupy* is a deliberate misspelling of the name Crupi.

⁴² *Pummadoru* is Calabrian slang for tomato. This nickname was given to Vincenzo Macrì for his tendency to have very red skin and the fact that he was bald.

In the end, the infiltration of the biggest flower auction in the world was the perfect front to traffic cocaine, because of the use of the highly organized logistical network of the Netherlands. The arrest in Italy of Vincenzo Crupi in 2015 was based on the accusation of mafia membership. He was never prosecuted for the trafficking of cocaine or the fraud in the Netherlands (DNA, 2016; Reuters, 2016). The curtain came down on him because of their diversification of activities and his role in the international network of the *Sidernesì*. The effect of this case on the logistical network in the Netherlands with locations like the Royal Flora Holland is the cutting back on the large amounts of cash and more knowledge on how organized crime could abuse the logistical networks in the Netherlands. The whole situation is a perfect example of how the 'Ndrangheta can infiltrate legitimate logistical networks with criminal intent and how the Dutch logistical networks are perfect opportunities for this:

“Of course, this was also an issue in the whole discussion about the flower auction: if we now intervene in the regulations, it will cost us money economically. Cost-benefit is the consideration.

[...]

It's making choices, I think, and in that sense, of course, it's just a complex discussion. If we are a logistical and financial nexus for Europe with the largest port in Europe, yes, the flip side of that is that you attract a mega amount of crime. That's what it is. There are things you could do in that, though. You could regulate some things. I think if you look at the flower auction, for example: there are a number of sectors that have simply stopped paying in cash (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022).”

Like the port of Rotterdam, the legal benefits of the Royal Flora Holland do have consequences.

“Right before the arrests in the fall of 2015, Vincenzo’s⁴³ brother married off his daughter to a young man from Siderno. The baroque villa close to Siderno at which the wedding took place was decorated with impressive walls of white roses. A few months after the wedding and the arrests, the bridegroom opened a flower company in Siderno bearing a Dutch name, which according to its Facebook page also imports flowers from Aalsmeer. The Crupi family’s latest florist told CORRECTIV he had no relationship with Crupi companies. He also claimed to have worked in the flower business prior to the arrests, dismissing the idea he had moved into the flower business after the arrests to ensure a continued Crupi presence in the business. But company records for the flower company he claimed to have worked for previously show that one of the owners is the son of a convicted mafia boss from the region while its managing director appears to live in Siderno in an area controlled by one of the mafia clans. On his Facebook page, however, the latter is in fact resident in the Netherlands and is active in the flower business (Correctiv, 2017).”

⁴³ Vincenzo Crupi, so the daughter of either Rocco or Giuseppe Crupi.

The arrest of the Crupi's and Vincenzo Macrì seems to not be the end of the *Sidernesì's* infiltration of the flower business. The interesting thing about the *functional diversification* by the *Sidernesì* in the Royal Flora Holland is the point that this was one of the few examples in which the import side of the cocaine trafficking was not the main focus of the investigation. This was an investigation focused on the middle-market distribution by wholesale distributors and intermediaries in the *oligopolistic sector*.

7.4.2.3 The exception that proves the rule?

Only it is not very clear to see a *consorzio* of cocaine trafficking as the whole of the logistical network was used by three brothers. It is more difficult to see cooperation between multiple organized crime groups because of the fact that the Royal Flora Holland posed such an opportunity to finance the cocaine trafficking by the same actors as the traffickers themselves. Which is not usually how the whole of the chain can be categorized. It is also a perfect example to see how violence or the threat of violence is the main focus of law enforcement and while economic networks are not hurt, global organized crime can abuse the logistical network in the Netherlands. The focus of Dutch law enforcement on violence can be seen as a side-effect of a late focus of Dutch law enforcement on organized crime in general (Kleemans, 2007; Tops & Tromp, 2017; Tromp & Tops, 2020). This case shows that *functional diversification* of individual mafiosi can be highly effective and does not need a transplantation close by, as this was not the case with the *Sidernesì* in the Netherlands (Varese, 2020). Looking further at the modus operandi in this case, because of the independence of the transportation chain and the investigation being concluded with an arrest in Italy, not a lot can be said further. There is an obvious instance of *delocalization* by using importers from Rotterdam and Albanian drivers to keep distance from the product itself, which resulted in the inability to prosecute the men involved for cocaine trafficking (E1, personal communication, September 29, 2021a; Reuters Investigates, 2016; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c). However, this example is not only a very visible instance of the abuse of the Dutch logistical system, it also seems like an anomaly because of it. While the distancing of the 'Ndrangheta from the cocaine itself and the use of *delocalization* can be categorized as factors in the pursuit of governance over the cocaine market, in this case it was more inherent in the *infiltration* of the flower market itself (E7, personal communication, May 24, 2022; Sciarrone & Storti, 2014; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c).

A different factor in the reason that it seems that not a lot can be concluded about the case is the fact that the investigation has been handed to Italy for the most part. The 'Ndranghetisti involved were not prosecuted in the Netherlands and therefore there are no judicial files that can be analyzed. The cooperation of the Canadian, Italian and Dutch police meant that Dutch law enforcement played a role in the investigation but did not play a role in the execution and prosecution. In the Netherlands, within the police the people responsible for the investigation and involved in the case itself could not be

interviewed. The case is still ongoing in Italy because it went to Cassation. This means that Dutch law enforcement would not give information because it is still seen as classified (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022). The Royal Flora Holland was also not available for interviewing as they wanted to let the case rest and not relight the case, even though there is possible evidence that the infiltration of the flower market has not ceased to exist with the arrest of Vincenzo Macrì and Vincenzo Crupi. John van Tol, the business partner of Vincenzo Crupi that was interviewed by Gabriella Ader in the podcast *Leven met de Maffia* has no online presence and was not available for contact via other routes (NPO1/ KRO NCRV, 2019). The brothers van Ballegooijen, who were victim of fraud by the hands of the Crupi's, were not available for comments. It could be concluded that the whole case was a stain on the image of the Royal Flora Holland and a traumatic experience for the flower traders involved. There has been a rapport from investigative bureau *Bureau Beke* that looks at the way to strengthen the resilience of the Royal Flora Holland. Any further explanation was unavailable (*Bureau Beke*, 2021). This means that a clear picture of the global presence of a possible *consorzio* and possible global cooperation of multiple organized crime groups is difficult to paint, as the Italian law enforcement focused on the 'Ndrangheta membership of Vincenzo Crupi. A better example of how larger scale cocaine trafficking by the 'ndrine functions is the way that the Dutch border regions with Germany are subject to *functional diversification*. This is the last of the three main examples explained in this chapter.

7.4.3 Operation Pollino, *cercato e trovato*

Operation Levinius, discussed in the preceding paragraph, was an effort of the *Landelijke Recherche* in the Netherlands that was based on the findings in *Project Cerca Trova* from 2014. This project had the unsatisfactory conclusion that there was no real deep knowledge about the manner in which the Italian Mafia had settled in the Netherlands. *Operation Levinius* was set up to get more sight on how the 'Ndrangheta had been active in the *Royal Flora Holland*. However, *Operation Levinius* was not the only investigation started on the basis of *Project Cerca Trova*. Within the *Project Cerca Trova* there is a list of 22 Italian restaurants in the Netherlands that raised the suspicion of being linked to the Italian mafias based on a number of criteria (*Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie*, 2017). The *FIOD* got the assignment to investigate two of these restaurants to see in what way they could be linked to the 'Ndrangheta. The restaurants in question were *Botticelli* in Venray and *La Vita* in Horst, both in Dutch Limburg (de Boer, 2020; NRC, 2018d). Both restaurants were owned by Giovanni Giorgi from San Luca. Giorgi was also the owner of multiple restaurants and ice

Figure 7.4: Sketch of Giovanni Giorgi



Source (OCCRP, 2021a)

cream parlors in West-Germany and travelled a lot in the border region while living in Tegelen in the Netherlands (de Boer, 2020; DIA, 2019a; DNA, 2019; OCCRP, 2018c, 2021a). From an early stage the FIOD found out that Giorgi used the restaurants as meeting places for members of the 'Ndrangheta and was involved in cocaine trafficking, money laundering and insurance fraud. Because of the international character of the investigation they contacted the German and Italian police to cooperate (E3, personal communication, April 4, 2022; E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022). This cooperation resulted in *Operation Pollino*, one of the biggest cross-border investigations on the 'Ndrangheta in Europe until then (Eurojust, 2018). *Operation Pollino*, named after a national park in Calabria, resulted in the arrest of 90 people of which 70 were of Italian descent and the confiscation of 140 kilograms of XTC pills and 4000 kilograms of cocaine, numerous luxury items and a reported 2 million euros (BBC News, 2018; Eurojust, 2018; NRC, 2018d; OCCRP, 2018b). While this can be seen as a clear victory for European law enforcement, there is more to *Operation Pollino* than just the arrests and confiscations. Like everything with the 'Ndrangheta, there is more than meets the eye. To see what *Operation Pollino* and the network that was disrupted implied I will focus on three aspects. These three aspects are indicative of the dominant ways used to traffic cocaine through the Netherlands and will therefore be the most fleshed out example used. While the other examples are more minor in scale by comparison, this example is exemplifying of the transnational character of the 'ndrine's role in the Dutch cocaine market.

7.4.3.1 The Tri-Border point as a natural habitat

The first aspect is the geographical region that *Pollino* focused on: Dutch Limburg and western Germany. The restaurants that sparked the investigation, La Vita in Horst and Botticelli in Venray, are located near the eastern border of Dutch Limburg with Germany. From Horst, Venray or Tegelen the owner of these restaurants, Giovanni Giorgi, could drive to German cities like Duisburg within the hour. Looking to the west the Dutch cities are quite close to Noord-Brabant and in that sense are placed in the perfect middle-ground between Noord-Brabant and Germany. However, why is this important? Jan Meeus described Noord-Brabant as such:

“What I've always seen as a very instructive thing, how that works, that's ultimately what that's about, that's in a book by Cyrille Fijnaut and Robby Roks and that's about the history of criminal investigation in Rotterdam. what they describe at one point is the rise of the container. And then the phenomenon of container theft arises, which they also call cargo theft. These guys from Rotterdam end up in Brabant on the caravan camps. You need a place where you can store that container so you can unload it quietly, and so then you see the connection between what happens at the port and the hinterland. So what I found so fascinating about that: where are all those containers of coke going? I bet you, so in part it's just Rotterdam at some point, but in part it goes through that Brabant barn.

[...]

What do those guys do? They naturally look for places where they don't stand out. Then you end up in Brabant. If you look at the shed in Wouwse Plantage⁴⁴, for example, there is nothing else there (E2, personal communication, April 12, 2022).”

This important character is combined with the important role that Noord-Brabant plays in the global XTC production and illegal weed production, which all come from the same factors that Meeus outlined in the quote (Tromp & Tops, 2020; Werdmölder, 2022). If Noord-Brabant plays a pivotal role in the further distribution of cocaine from Rotterdam into the rest of Europe like explained here, then the placement of the restaurants in Venray and Horst as meeting places do make a lot more sense. This combined with the role that West-Germany plays for the ‘ndrine from San Luca and the mafia density in Belgian Limburg area like for example in Maasmechelen, means that these restaurants are located in the middle of all these locations. When looking at *transit-crime* like cocaine trafficking, the first point of focus is on entry points (Middelmeer *et al.*, 2018; Reuter, 2014; Sergi, 2021). However, this reduces the focus on the areas where the

transit really happens. These hinterlands like Noord-Brabant are important transit areas because of the lack of focus from law enforcement. The hinterlands are the geographical equivalent of the *oligopolistic sector* of the middle-market, low amounts of violence and involved organized crime groups (Arlacchi, 1998; Reuter, 2014). This minimized risk for the groups involved mainly in the *transit-crime* in the hinterlands is

Figure 7.5: Masked police stand in an ice parlor in Duisburg, western Germany, Wednesday, Dec. 5, 2018 as authorities conduct coordinated raids in Germany, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands in a crackdown on the Italian mafia.



Source (Christoph Reichwein/dpa via AP, 6-12-2018)

perfect for foreign organized crime groups like the ‘Ndrangheta in the Netherlands (van de Bunt *et al.*, 2014). The added value of being located in a border region means that not only this placement is important for the ‘ndrine involved here, it also make it much more difficult for law enforcement to investigate.

⁴⁴ Wouwse Plantage became internationally known in 2020 when the Dutch police released videos of a torture chamber that was constructed by organized crime.

The second aspect is an indirect consequence of the placement in a border region. This border region is not only important because of the placement in the middle of other important locations for the 'ndrine, it has a positive side effect for the 'ndrine. Like explained in chapter 5, 'Ndranghetisti do not see the borders. Borders are doors. Only, because of the Schengen Accords, these doors are open for civilians and therefore mafiosi, while they are more difficultly used by law enforcement. While *Operation Pollino* resulted in cooperation between the Dutch, German, Belgian and Italian law enforcement agencies it also showed the difficulties with these types of cooperation (de Boer, 2020; E3, personal communication, April 4, 2022). In an early stage the FIOD concluded that the investigation had an international character and that investigating merely the Dutch side of the story would not yield enough results. An example of this is that the phone taps that were used by Dutch law enforcement could not be used in the investigation when the recordings were gotten on German territory (de Boer, 2020, p. 246). The investigators contacted German law enforcement, but this was much more difficult than hoped:

“They were very happy with that case of, what's it called, in Limburg. But what I understood is it is of course also a bit of competition between police forces here. In the end, it was not a very mediagenic case for the Netherlands. That only one 'Ndranghetist had been caught, you know, but the FIOD had been investigating for years. And then besides that competition, there is just a big difference in focus and modus operandi. We [Dutch law enforcement] didn't think the drugs were that interesting. We already catch enough cocaine in Rotterdam so the focus for Dutch police forces just wasn't that much on that. So at that time we didn't find drugs interesting at all and in Germany they liked to do drugs. But in the Netherlands they wanted to do money laundering anyway, in the end they succeeded but because of that it took three years before they got their hands on it and a lot of people in it may have escaped... (E3, personal communication, April 4, 2022)”

I checked this with the National Police in the Netherlands, but they could not respond because the sessions in court were still ongoing (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022). The FIOD was not available for communication because of the same reason. What is interesting to note is the fact that the FIOD started their investigation in April of 2014 and the moment that the official mode of cooperation, a declaration as a Joint Investigation Team, was signed in October 2016 (de Boer, 2020, pp. 245–248). The ultimate date on which the 90 arrests were made was the 5th of December 2018 (Eurojust, 2018; NRC, 2018b, 2018c). This means that the investigation took four and a half years and that half of that time was just the FIOD's investigation, while they arrested the least amount of

Figure 7.6: Domenico Pelle, mug shot released by the Italian Polizia di Stato



Source (OCCRP, 2018b)

‘Ndranghetisti. Only two members of the structure were arrested on Dutch soil. It is in this light that it seems understandable that international cooperation is not the focus of law enforcement, there is not a lot of honor to be gained (de Boer, 2020; E3, personal communication, April 4, 2022; E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022). However, this is one of the most important advantages that the ‘Ndrangheta has over law enforcement in Europe and the reason why Dutch Limburg is so important for the ‘ndrine. The combination of the need for law enforcement to investigate internationally when trying to dismantle the networks in the tri-border point and the reluctance of law enforcement to do so. The last aspect that is important to discuss when looking at *Operation Pollino* are the specific ‘ndrine that were the focus of the operation.

7.4.3.2 The Usual Suspects

Thirdly, the restaurants that the FIOD focused on were owned by Giovanni Giorgi, who was a member of the *Giorgi-Boviciani* ‘ndrina from San Luca worked for a similar *consorzio* as the one of *Maluferru* (OCCRP, 2021a, 2021b). Which is not surprising seeing as that *consorzio* was dismantled in *Operation Platinum*, which was the follow-up investigation of *Operation Pollino* (OCCRP, 2018b, 2021a). Giorgi had opened several restaurants and ice-cream parlors in the region of Dutch-Limburg and Western-Germany, in towns and cities surrounding Duisburg and Dusseldorf (DNA, 2019; OCCRP, 2021a). These were used to launder money and as meeting places for the members of the *consorzio* which were mainly members of the *Pelle-Vottari*⁴⁵, *Nirta-Scalzone*⁴⁶ and *Romeo-Staccu*⁴⁷ clans. The *Nirta-Scalzone* and *Pelle-Gambazza* were the ‘ndrine that would operate as the financial backers of the *consorzio*, being part of the ‘Ndrangheta aristocracy. The *family dynasty* of the *Pelle-Gambazza* and *Nirta-Scalzone* means that they have earned the respect and aristocratic power to sit back and finance the *consorzio* (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022; Sergi, 2020a). The role of Giovanni Giorgi as part of the *Giorgi-Boviciani* ‘ndrina was based upon the logistical process of the cocaine trafficking and the laundering of the money (OCCRP, 2018c). One of the contacts used by Giovanni Giorgi was Sebastiano Singati, the *Latitante* of the *Pelle-Vottari* clan discussed in Chapter 5 (HLN, 2022; OCCRP, 2021a; Sauviller & Di Rosa, 2016). The *Giorgi-Boviciani* made use of local organized crime groups for the import of the cocaine and the distribution to regions like Noord-Brabant for warehousing of the cocaine. The leader of the *consorzio* was Domenico Pelle, one of the most important members of the *Pelle-Vottari* ‘ndrina. This ‘ndrina was the acting leader in the whole operation (DNA, 2019; OCCRP, 2018c). This is a testament to the dominance that the *Pelle-Vottari* had, which is traditionally given to ‘ndrine from the town of San Luca, especially in cooperation with ‘ndrine that are originally based

⁴⁵ The ‘ndrina that was the owner of restaurant Da Bruno in Duisburg.

⁴⁶ Different from the *Nirta-Strangio*, the *Nirta-Scalzone* are also known as the *Nirta-La Maggiore*.

⁴⁷ The clan *Maluferru* was a part of.

within the *Mandamento Ionico* (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022; Gratteri & Nicaso, 2009). However, the fact that they were actively involved in the operation marked the fact that they were not part of the highest aristocratic clans that operated in the cocaine *consorzio*.

The operation meant the dismantlement of a cocaine trafficking structure that spanned 5 countries in Europe.

7.5 Modus operandi analysis

However, what was the modus operandi of the 'Ndranghetisti in the Netherlands and what does that say about the migration of these 'ndrine? As explained, this specific operation started with the investigation of restaurants in Dutch Limburg. These restaurants came into focus with Dutch law enforcement because of the suspicion of money laundering and subsequent role as meeting places for the involved 'ndrine (Eurojust, 2018; *Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie*, 2017). Looking at the data, the best generalizable modus operandi of the 'ndrine in the Netherlands follows the example of Dutch Limburg. The other two examples are more examples of instances in which 'ndrine migrated to the Netherlands and trafficked cocaine on a smaller scale and more individual basis. In Chapter 5 I discussed the role of restaurants like Da Bruno in Duisburg as meeting places for the transplanted 'Ndrangheta structure in western Germany. The *Camera di Controllo* in western Germany was based on the meeting of 'Ndranghetisti in these restaurants (E3, personal communication, April 4, 2022; E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022; E5, personal communication, May 3, 2022; E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022). Does this mean that restaurants in Dutch Limburg play the same role and that there is a *transplantation* of the 'Ndrangheta in the Netherlands? There seems to be a fertile ground of Calabrian immigrants in Dutch Limburg:

“But there is also still heavy weight in the variable of the diaspora from the 60s and 70s. And a lot of Italians simply came to live in Limburg because of mining in the 60s and 70s.

[...]

So if you look, say where, if you also ask us: of where do you see the presence or incidents most prevalent? Yes, then we actually pick North Holland, South Holland, Rotterdam, and then Limburg is indeed also a striking place and that has to do with geography on the one hand. With its attractive location, and it also has to do with the historical community that has housed there for a very long time (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022).”

However there needs to be a *demand for criminal governance* to be filled by the migrating mafia (E7, personal communication, May 24, 2022; Varese, 2020). The role of the restaurants as meeting places for more traditional mafia type activities could only not be confirmed:

“Yes, then you really do go into the content and I have not run the investigation myself. We as AMT have been involved in, but of course that's again how we work and in addition the hearing is ongoing, so I can't say too much about that in terms of content. Perhaps the FIOD can say something more about that (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022).”

The FIOD did not want to get into the content of the investigation and the role of the specific restaurants. However, when taking into consideration that there is a case of *transplantation* within the same region with the *transplantation* in western Germany, the restaurants in the Netherlands do not necessarily need to be meeting places for the transplanted *locali* (DNA, 2019; E3, personal communication, April 4, 2022; E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022; Varese, 2020). It seems that the dominant role of Dutch restaurants is as money laundries and meeting places for the logistical planning of cocaine trafficking. There are no accounts of extortion in Dutch Limburg so the *traditional mafia* dimension seems to be non-existent. Although it is important to look critically at the possible reasons for not having accounts of extortion in Dutch Limburg:

And I think there is a difference too, between Holland and Italy, because Italian society has grown up with mafia, is sensitive to the fear a mafia brings. (the mafia) Also needs only half a word, mafia of course, and the 'Ndrangheta, also master in making threats, which are not threats, but come across as mega-threatening: in the sense of 'gosh, I had a cup of tea with your mother the other day, is she all right now?' Yes, well, these are things that obviously don't work as well in the Netherlands, but there are also signs that they do within the Italian community in the Netherlands. Police employees might not always see the threatening nature of these insinuations and this might have an effect on the administration. So there is a kind of dependence on their reputation, which they can use in the Netherlands, especially within the Italian community, but to which other criminal groups may be less sensitive or other citizens may be less sensitive (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022).

When looking at the literature and data gathered from my interviews, the dominant role of the restaurants was as money laundries and meeting places for the logistical process of cocaine trafficking.

7.5.1 Hierarchy in Dutch *consorzi*

The mid-level *'ndrina* used these restaurants to set up the logistical network used by the cocaine *consorzio* that was funded by the aristocratic *'ndrine* (OCCRP, 2018b, 2021a, 2021b). Figure 7.7 offers a view of locations important to the *Giorgi-Boviciani 'ndrina* and their role in the logistical network, this can be generalized to see how *'Ndrangheta* cocaine *consorzi* act in Europe. The aristocratic *'ndrine* were dominant forces in the San Luca *transplantation* to western Germany and in this way their *transplantation* filled the *demand for criminal governance* and the *traditional mafia dimension* while the mid-level and

Figure 7.7: Key locations in the cocaine trafficking network of the *Giorgi 'ndrina*



Source (OCCRP, 2021)

more logistically focused *'ndrine* were active in the *entrepreneurial mafia dimension* as *intermediaries* (Calderoni, 2012; E7, personal communication, May 24, 2022; Kenney, 2007; Phillips, 2017; Reuter, 2014; Varese, 2020). This is in my eyes once again evidence that the more important a *'ndrina* is, the more distanced to the cocaine the *'ndrina* is and the more power it has to operate as a true mafia-type organization (E5, personal communication, May 3, 2022; E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022). This is why I believe it important to see the *'Ndrangheta* as an archipelagos of quasi-independent organizations that are glued together by culture and internal power structures. The fact that a *'ndrina* or individual is part of the *'Ndrangheta* does not mean that the criminal acts committed and primary activities can be seen as part of a rational and pyramidal organization. *'Ndrine* act independently but in accordance to other *'ndrine* who they are connected to. This means that migration of *'ndrine* into the Netherlands and specifically the tri-border regions takes the form of intentional *functional diversification* to the Netherlands that uses the *transplantation* of the aristocratic *'ndrine* in western Germany as a permanent base and *delocalization* to distance themselves from the cocaine itself (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022; Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c; Sergi & Rizzuti, 2021; Varese, 2011, 2014).

The combination of *'ndrine* that are part of these cocaine *consorzi*, like the one from *Operation Platinum*, predominantly come from the San Luca area. However, the retail market that the *consorzio*

were distributing the cocaine to was in Milan. Like the 'Ndranghetisti from the *Nirta-Strangio 'ndrina*, the region of origin of most of the 'ndrine active in the Netherlands, specifically in the border regions, is the San Luca area. Looking at the division of *Mandamenti* in Calabria, all protagonists that I discussed in this chapter are from the *Mandamento Ionico*. The main source of income for the 'ndrine from this *Mandamento* is cocaine trafficking and the division in aristocratic 'ndrine versus other 'ndrine is seen in the roles the 'ndrine operate in. Like explained in Chapter 5, the transplantation of these 'ndrine in the Ruhr area has been instrumental in the presence of the 'ndrine in the Netherlands. With the exception of the Crupi brothers and their role in the global system of the *Sidernesì*, the main line that can be seen in the migration of 'Ndrangheta is a form of *functional diversification* linked to the *transplantation* of the San Luca 'ndrine in the Ruhr area. The border area's in the Netherlands are sufficiently close to the regions of 'Ndrangheta *transplantation* that they function as extensions of this *transplantation*. The perfect strategic location of the Netherlands, combining the ports of Antwerp and Rotterdam, the hinterland and the transplantations of the 'ndrine in western Germany makes the Netherlands an important location for the Ionian 'ndrine to operate.

The role of the Netherlands as transit-country and the following *transit-crime* makes it so that Dutch law enforcement should cooperate as the crimes committed by the 'ndrine cannot be seen in isolation. There is no case of real clan formation that can be evidenced in the Netherlands, although Italian magistrates and public media might push this agenda. The Netherlands is the 'ndrine's marketplace and place of refuge:

“So yes, why don't we see them? Because they have a very good grasp of moving under the radar. If you apply it specifically to the Netherlands: I think they understand very well that the Netherlands is hiding and marketplace, and in your hiding and marketplace you are not going to draw attention to yourself. You want to use the facilities that are there, without that being disturbed by unwanted attention. So that's how they operate in Holland (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022).”

The modus operandi of staying under the radar is easily pulled off in the border regions, when the 'Ndranghetisti can cross borders and therefore areas of jurisdiction.

7.5.2 Grand Turismo, one of the many parts of the system

Furthermore there are more small-scale operations that have been dismantled by law enforcement in which the 'Ndrangheta is one of many players involved. One of these examples is *Operation Buslijnen* in which the 'Ndrangheta cooperated with Tunisians and Albanians. In this operation it was not proven that the 'Ndrangheta was one of the controlling actors. The involvement was on the same level as the Albanians and Tunisians and it made use of tour busses to traffic cocaine and hashish from northern Europe to Italy:

“As mentioned earlier, Albanian criminal groups maintain firm connections with fellow countrymen's gangs posted in other countries, enabling them to carry out business at the transnational level. In particular, clear connections of this kind have emerged with the Netherlands and England. Cross-border operations emerged at the conclusion of the "*Buslijnen*" operation in January, when the *Guardia di Finanza* arrested in Florence not only three Italian nationals but also five Albanians belonging to an organization dedicated to international drug trafficking that had logistical bases in Amsterdam (Netherlands) and Albania. The narcotics (marijuana and cocaine) arrived in Italy from Northern Europe concealed on tour buses on the Holland-Belgium route. An activism that is still found in the "Metropolis" operation of the Brescia Carabinieri, who arrested in February 30 Albanian nationals, 7 Italians and 2 Tunisians, all active in drug trafficking and dealing in the area of the Brescia, in La Spezia, in Venice, in the metropolitan area of Milan, and with extension of illicit activities in the Netherlands (DNA, 2020, p. 135).”

In this *Operation Buslijnen*, if there is one connecting factor then it is the connections made by Albanians. This would prove that if there was one actor that was the leading/controlling actor, it was not the 'Ndrangheta. This is in complete contrast to the notion that the 'Ndrangheta has a permanent basis in the Netherlands from which it controls the cocaine market. Still law enforcement agencies argue that there are structures in the Netherlands. The nuance that should be given in this critique is the evolution of the wording in these reports. Where they first published about transplantations in the Netherlands and permanent bases, now there is a notion of structured offshoots. Which could be anything, the *functional diversification* and *infiltration* in the Royal Flora Holland or a *transplantation* of 'ndrine in the Netherlands. Only the comparison to countries with real 'Ndrangheta *transplantations* is there, which is framing this structured offshoot into the realm of *transplantation*:

“Structured offshoots of the 'ndrangheta are present in Germany, Switzerland, Spain, France, and the Netherlands, as well as on the Australian and American continents; on the latter continent, the organization is said to be operating mainly in Canada and South America (DIA, 2019a, p. 83).”

It is understandable that the idea of a monopolistic force in the cocaine market which is present in the main cocaine importing region, would have a structured offshoot. However, this Italy focused view frames the 'Ndrangheta as an organization that uses international firms that are structured as bases of operation to control the European cocaine market. In the end the trafficking of cocaine is the main issue according to Sergi:

“So you label something as something and then the label sticks and you behave like your label. So it's I think the problem that we have now is that we have these Ndrangheta brands everywhere in the world, which means different things in different places, by the way, and in Europe which is still adopting the Italian version of it because it's close, there is no such a thing as a Dutch Ndrangheta in the same way as there is an Australian brand. That's just a random drug deal. It is the drug trafficker in the Netherlands,

which whether or not is 'Ndrangheta, it doesn't make any difference whatsoever because it's still trafficking drugs, which is the main issue from a legal perspective (E8, personal communication, May 26, 2022)."

The fact that there are 'Ndranghetisti distributing drugs that are imported in the Netherlands does not make it a fact that the 'Ndrangheta has transplanted its structure in the Netherlands, has 'colonized' the Netherlands or controls the Dutch cocaine market. There can be individuals that are part of the 'Ndrangheta active in the Netherlands and the most important judicial manner of investigating and prosecuting these individuals is the fact that they traffic cocaine. When these individuals are part of the 'Ndrangheta, Italian penal code can prosecute these individuals as members of a mafia and this is mostly how 'Ndranghetisti are prosecuted that were arrested in the Netherlands. The fact that this is mostly how cocaine traffickers associated with the 'Ndrangheta are prosecuted only makes the discursive power that Italy and their law enforcement stronger. They are the leading force in the prosecution and investigation of the 'Ndrangheta, only the flip side of this is the way that they influence European discourse on 'Ndrangheta. As I have tried to show in this thesis, Italian law enforcement, magistrates and research institutes are the *moral entrepreneurs* that frame the way the 'Ndrangheta is seen in Europe and the world. This frame however, is built in a way because of their misunderstanding of the rest of Europe and this misunderstanding did also make way for a misunderstanding of why the rest of Europe did nothing in their eyes for years about the 'Ndrangheta.

7.6 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter there was a combination of three examples of different 'ndrine and modus operandi of these respective 'ndrine in the Netherlands. In the example which looked at the Nirta-Strangio 'ndrina and their functional diversification to the Randstad in the Netherlands, the scale of cocaine trafficking was a more individualized form. The Netherlands were mainly a place of refuge for some and that was combined with individual scale cocaine trafficking by other members. The second example is indicative of how Dutch legal logistical networks can be infiltrated and abused by the 'ndrine as a guise to traffic cocaine. Even though the Royal Flora Holland and feasibly other locations like it seem to offer the 'ndrine perfect opportunities for this abuse, it seems to be smaller scale and more exceptional than more 'traditional' forms of cocaine trafficking. This form was exemplified by the third example, being the case of Dutch Limburg and Brabant. The hinterland region in the Netherlands offers the perfect location for the 'ndrine in the middle of the ports and the German transplantations combined with a high level of anonymity. In the cocaine consorzi that are used there, the same hierarchy can be noticed as in different cocaine consorzi used by the 'ndrine. The quasi-independent nature of the 'ndrine makes for a system of cooperations between 'ndrine in which each respective 'ndrine has their role. Which means that the logistically oriented 'ndrine, like the *Giorgi-Boviciani* from the example, are the

'ndrine that have functionally diversified into the Netherlands with the use of restaurants and ice cream parlors as meeting points and money laundries. The cocaine is shipped through the Dutch hinterlands into the German transplantsations and further into Italian cities like Milan. All throughout this process there are multiple 'ndrine responsible for different tasks. Due to the fact that there is soft cooperation between the 'ndrine in multiple countries in the course of this transnational transit-crime, there are different actors in different countries with some overlap. This affects the manner of investigation needed to halt these activities and the frames that are used by Italian law enforcement as to the role of the 'ndrine in the European and Dutch cocaine market.

In all three main cases discussed the cooperation between national law enforcement agencies was the key in apprehending the 'Ndranghetisti involved. The 'Ndrangheta is a global operating organization and within Europe, because of the Schengen Agreement, it can move undisturbed over borders. This means that while Italian mafias make use of the loosening economic borders to do business without being hindered, these borders do very well exist for law enforcement. Like explained in the example of *Operation Pollino*, European cooperation is not on the level it should be to really challenge the 'Ndrangheta. When looking at the examples of the implications of 'Ndrangheta involvement in the middle-market, there needs to be European cooperation if there is to be shed a light on. The position that the Netherlands has as one of the main hubs of cocaine trafficking in Europe should be ascribed to the fact that the Netherlands is one of the main hubs of legal trade in Europe. However, there is a flip side to the position as main hub of legal trade and that not only needs to be acknowledged but there should also be investments in the pull effect that it has on organized crime. Like the National Police member said: it is a case of cost-benefit consideration (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2022). It only seems that the costs and benefits are both not seen in their totality. While the 'Ndrangheta is difficult to investigate because of their role in the middle-market and the fact that the arrest of members is not as mediagenic as large cocaine busts in the port, they are certainly actors in the whole of the European market. However, since the effect in the media that the *Strage di Duisburg* had and the publicity that the 'Ndrangheta garnered with it there has been written more on the 'Ndrangheta. This is however, not an evolution that is completely positive as the lack of knowledge on this organization can have negative effects as well.

8. Conclusion

The presence of 'Ndrangheta members in the Netherlands is a logical consequence of multiple factors that I have explained in this thesis. The 'Ndrangheta as an organization has migrated to multiple continents and used this global reach in conjunction with their early presence in the cocaine market to use the Netherlands as a marketplace for their activities.

8.1 Summarizing and concluding

However, how did this take place? To research this I formulated my first research question:

RQ1 *“What is the nature of 'Ndrangheta involvement in the Dutch cocaine market based on their global migration and role in the global cocaine market?”*

I will answer this and my research questions by answering the sub-questions that I have used to order my thesis. Starting with the first empirical chapter and my typification of the 'Ndrangheta as an organization:

RQ 1: Sub-question 1: *“What is the 'Ndrangheta and how did it historically evolve?”*

The 'Ndrangheta is the Calabrian iteration of the Italian Mafia and has been in existence for over 150 years. The 'Ndrangheta started out as a prison gang that was influenced by the Freemasons in the penal system of the *Risorgimento*. Here the 'Ndranghetisti learned to structure themselves with culture and mixing their culture with esoteric elements to create a cultural glue that binds members together (Dickie, 2011, 2013; Paoli, 2014). The combination of this cultural basis with the socio-geographical area of Calabria, which is a region where small distances are great and a strong sense of overarching Calabrian culture is what binds the region more than travel between towns (Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016c). This meant that the 'Ndrangheta is a horizontal organization that binds its members in the esoteric Calabrian based culture in which aristocracy is the main power structure to be observed (Paoli, 1998, 2020; Sergi, 2022). Because Italian law enforcement is focused on finding a mappable power architecture, the operation that constructed this, *Operation Crimine*, has been used by law enforcement and the media to map out a formal vertical power structure for the 'Ndrangheta. I would therefore argue that it is mostly based on this focus of law enforcement and not as much on the perceived reality of 'Ndranghetisti themselves. There are manners of collaboration in the form of *consorzi*, but these are dominantly based on principles of the aristocracy. There are also real vertical power structures like the *Mandamenti* and the *Crimine*, but these do not yield the power that is made out by Italian law enforcement (Ciconte, 2014). Furthermore the typification of the 'Ndrangheta is difficult to articulate to public media and therefore Italian moral entrepreneurs seek comparisons in the legal economy by comparing the 'Ndrangheta to a business. This is in my eyes where the

misunderstanding of the 'Ndrangheta by foreign public media is fed by Italian moral entrepreneurs like the DNA, DIA and research institutes like Eurispes and Demoskopikas. Another factor feeding this misunderstanding is the fact that the 'Ndrangheta is not only a mafia active in Italy. The fact that the 'Ndrangheta is internationally active affects the international perception of the organization. This was analyzed in the second empirical chapter.

RQ 1: Sub-question 2: *“How did 'Ndrangheta evolve into an international organization that has links in multiple parts of the world?”*

Because the 'Ndrangheta is not a top-down rationally led enterprise like it is sometimes conceived to be, the 'ndrine could autonomously migrate to different locations in the world in different manners. Sometimes rational and sometimes irrational. One of the most defining reasons for the migration of the 'Ndrangheta is the migration of Calabrians. The migratory routes of Calabrians were used by the 'ndrine, who migrated alongside their fellow Calabrians. This does not mean that wherever Calabrians went, the 'Ndrangheta was able to transplant their structures or even plant itself at all, this was all based on the specific context of the respective locations (Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016b; Varese, 2011, 2020). The most important transplantations of the 'Ndrangheta are found in Lombardy, Canada, Australia and western Germany (Sergi & Lavorgna, 2016b; Sergi & Rizzuti, 2021). I have discussed three of these four locations. In these three locations the 'ndrine were able to transplant their structure and activities. Furthermore there have been cases of *functional diversification* in Belgium which was mostly based on rational entrepreneurial behavior and was helped by the transplantation in western Germany (Varese, 2020). The idea that the 'Ndrangheta is one top-down enterprise structure which bases its choices on a rational board of directors, like the comparisons to legal businesses from the first chapter, is at the root of an ominous discourse surrounding 'Ndrangheta migration. In this discourse there is use of words like infiltration and colonization. These words are as abstract as they are useless for the academic research that can be done on the basis of these words. It did however make the 'Ndrangheta an organized crime group with 'ndrine with a global reach, although this reach cannot and is not used by the whole organization. The way in which this reach is used by certain 'ndrine connected to the cocaine market is what was analyzed in the chapter answering the third sub-question.

RQ 1: Sub-question 3: *“What is the Modus Operandi and role of the 'Ndrangheta in the European Cocaine market and how has this changed between the 1980s and the early 2000s?”*

The 'Ndrangheta was one of the first European organized crime groups to focus its efforts in the cocaine market in the 1980s. This was helped by the fact that the dominant organized crime group in Italy at the time, the Cosa Nostra, preferred the heroin market. However, the cooperation with the Cosa Nostra in the heroin and cocaine market did help the 'Ndrangheta to learn the ropes of drug

trafficking and meant that they could use their reputation as one of the firsts in the cocaine market (Calderoni, 2012; Paoli, 2004). They used the network based cooperation system of *consorzi* to organize themselves in the cocaine market. While they are credited by public media and Italian law enforcement as a monopolistic actor in the cocaine market, even if they might have been, they are not (Reuter, 2014). They are an organization with a grand reputation and global reach, but that does not mean that they are the only ones. The 'Ndrangheta is mostly active within the wholesale distribution in the middle-market section of the cocaine market. Again it is also not the whole organization that is in on the cocaine market and has the power that is described to them. The port of Gioia Tauro is also named as the main entry point for cocaine into Europe, used solely by the 'Ndrangheta, which it is not (CSIL, 2012; Russo & Chilà, 2021). The misunderstanding or misdiagnosing by Italian law enforcement frames the 'Ndrangheta as something which it is not. There are 'ndrine active in the cocaine market and there are 'ndrine that have a lot of power within this market, but it is not the whole organization and none have the power of a monopolistic force. This makes it difficult to bluntly categorize the nature of 'Ndrangheta involvement in words like 'monopolistic'. In the fourth empirical chapter this nature was analyzed.

RQ 1: Sub-question 4: *“What is the nature of 'Ndrangheta migration and involvement in the Dutch cocaine market since 2006?”*

The Netherlands being one of the most important transit-markets for legal goods makes the logistical network perfect to be used by cocaine trafficking organizations to import cocaine. From the most dominant cocaine entry points of Antwerp and Rotterdam, the cocaine is trafficked to the rest of Europe (Middelmeer *et al.*, 2018; Tromp & Tops, 2020; Werdmölder, 2022). The 'Ndrangheta is active in the wholesale distribution stage of the market in which they use the Schengen Accords and distance from the import of cocaine to distribute cocaine and stay under the radar. The predominant use of the Dutch hinterlands in Brabant and Limburg is connected to the route that the cocaine takes from the ports in the west to the 'Ndrangheta transplantations in western-Germany. From these transplantations on, cocaine takes the route to the dominant retail markets which are located in the north of Italy. The fact that this is also the most under investigated section of the market by law enforcement and the borders that exist of law enforcement when trying to cooperate makes it difficult to investigate transnational cocaine trafficking in this section of the market (Arlacchi, 1998; Reuter, 2014). There have been three major instances where the role of the 'Ndrangheta has been uncovered and 'Ndranghetisti arrested, but there is still a great dark number. However, it can be said that there is no transplantation of 'Ndrangheta structures that has real longevity in the Netherlands and the focus of the 'ndrine active in the Netherlands is on the *entrepreneurial mafia* dimension. They are one of the many players that are active in the Dutch cocaine market.

However, as explained in the introduction, there are numerous contradictions and ideas found on this issue. These contradictions results in my opinion in the muddying of knowledge on the 'Ndrangheta and their manner of operating in a less researched section of the cocaine market. I researched this by looking at my second research question:

RQ 2: *“What is the effect of the discursive power of Italian law enforcement on the perception of the 'Ndrangheta in the global cocaine market?”*

I defined the Italian *moral entrepreneurs* as Italian law enforcement agencies *Direzione Nazionale Anti-Mafia e Anti-Terrorismo* (DNA) and the *Direzione Investigativa Anti-Mafia* (DIA) and Italian research institutes Eurispes and Demoskopikas. These actors have discursive power because of the 'newness' of the research field. Their seniority and perceived expertise makes it so that statements by these actors are taken as gospel. This affects the discourse because of the fact that statements by these moral entrepreneurs are not made in a vacuum but serve causes. They do, however, affect the discourse. The manner of this effect was analyzed by answering the two sub-questions, with the first being:

RQ 2: Sub-question 1: *“How do Italian law enforcement agencies frame the 'Ndrangheta as an international organized crime group active in the European cocaine market?”*

Italian law enforcement agencies frame the 'Ndrangheta as a business like enterprise in which there is a level of independence of the autonomous 'ndrine. However due to *Operation Crimine* and the way that mafias are investigated and constructed there is a tendency of predominantly framing a strict form of vertical hierarchy. This has multiple consequence for the frame of the 'Ndrangheta as to their role in the European cocaine market. The fact that the 'Ndrangheta is framed as a top-down enterprise that colonizes and monopolizes markets like the cocaine market is fruitful for Italian law enforcement and the pressure that they want to put on the European community. However, it is not conducive in my eyes to fruitful discussion on the European cocaine market as it underestimates the fractured nature of the market as a whole. This monopolization is brought into life by framing the 'Ndrangheta from its inception as an organization that it is not and uses this frame to further the idea that the 'Ndrangheta is holding monopolistic power in a market that is highly fractured. The oligopolistic sector of the cocaine market may be the least researched sector and a sector where the least amount of actors are found, it is not prone to monopolization. In my following of Reuter (2014) and Arlacchi (1998) on the way that illegal markets are often mischaracterized as monopolized while they often are not, this view is propagated in combination with a mischaracterization of the 'Ndrangheta as an organization.

The interest of Italian law enforcement in the geopolitical sphere is the recognition that the 'Ndrangheta are the to be feared organized crime group from Italy. This keeps Italian law enforcement in the seat as experts on organized crime in Europe. This may come from an intentional strategy of Italian law enforcement, but seems to be more a consequence of the inability to speak or read English. This focuses the Italian law enforcement agencies on mafias like the 'Ndrangheta and reduces their focus on different organized crime groups as they do not know as well what the highly fractured whole of the European cocaine market works. The role of Italian law enforcement as *moral entrepreneurs* is seated within the expertise of Italians as historically being the most directly victimized group. However, this expertise on Italian mafias focuses their gaze on strictly Italian mafias in Europe as well. This focus frames the 'Ndrangheta as an organization that is still relevant as a monopolistic force within the European cocaine market, even though it is not. However, Italian law enforcement agencies cannot be exclusively responsible for the framing of the 'Ndrangheta in the public sphere. There is a role for Italian researchers and journalists that use this frame in their own ways.

RQ 2: Sub-question 2: *"How do Italian researchers and investigative journalists frame the 'Ndrangheta as an international organized crime group active in the European cocaine market?"*

The typification as the 'Ndrangheta as explained in the first sub-answer becomes a problem when looking at influence on research institutes and journalism. As the reports published by Italian law enforcement agencies are not written for the public sphere, but are used by Italian research institutes to facilitate their research. These researches are then used by journalists from all over the world, as the expertise of Italian law enforcement and research institutes is unquestioned. This only adds to the frame that the 'Ndrangheta is a monopolistic force in the cocaine market and that the organization is compared to legal businesses like holdings. The discourse surrounding the 'Ndrangheta is therefore sailing more and more away from the data collected and analyzed in this thesis. The frame is predominantly constructed by Italian law enforcement in their focus on the 'Ndrangheta and disregard for foreign organizations, but it is maintained and conversed to the public by research institutes and media outlets that do not understand the organization and therefore follow these experts. The fact that comparisons to businesses make the material more easily digestible for the general public and the focus on money as main denominator acts as selling point for the media. In the wake of this the 'Ndrangheta has become more and more ominous in the discourse used to describe it. I have rebutted these ideas and have thus tried to analyze the way that they are placed in the discourse by these moral entrepreneurs, seeing them as an opposing discourse to my personal academic and social views.

8.2 Contributing to society and criminology

In this research I have combined the fields of organized crime research focused on mafias, mafia mobility and illegal drug markets to form a holistic view of an international organized crime group that is active in a foreign market with the aim of transnational cocaine trafficking. In this way I have hoped to contribute to the criminological world how these fields are correlated and interrelated. While I do think that these types of researches can be used broadly in the rest of criminological research, I do think that the specific context of this research is in such a way specialistic that I may not be easily replicated. However, when the 'Ndrangheta or likewise structured organizations are researched it is important that this research evidences that academic discussions on the structure of organized crime groups have deeper practical consequences than mere theoretical.

The way that the 'Ndrangheta is characterized in this thesis as a quasi-independent archipelagos of 'ndrine that are connected through culture and blood ties is central in the way that this organization acts. If this thesis would be based on the idea that the 'Ndrangheta is a unitary structured organization that is hierarchically controlled from the top down, then the manner of involvement visualized of the 'Ndrangheta in the cocaine market would have been completely different. The fact that the 'ndrine are independent is vital in the conceptualization of the 'Ndrangheta in this way. With this thesis I have attempted to show that the conceptualization of the 'Ndrangheta is not only an academically debated subject, but has very real implications on the framing of organized crime groups. The manner of this conceptualization constructs the way that issues are viewed from the outset. This can be seen when analyzing the frames used by Italian law enforcement and other moral entrepreneurs that have been analyzed in this thesis. I do think that it is of utmost importance to look at organized crime groups in a critical way as I have tried to do, because in the context of for example mafia mobility the critical view of the 'Ndrangheta is not only important when deciphering the organization but also in the way it migrates.

Furthermore I have hoped to show the importance of research into the *middle-market section* of illegal markets by academia and law enforcement both. The dark number and lack of knowledge about this section and the *oligopolistic sector* is logical from a law enforcement perspective, but has negative consequences for the knowledge on the whole of the market and the actors involved in them. The focus of law enforcement on the import and retail sections of the market constructs the dark number because of the lack of knowledge in the *middle-market section*. This is problematic in and of itself, but the way that the 'ndrine are predominantly active in the wholesale distribution makes it more difficult for law enforcement agencies to investigate. The role of criminology in investigating the *middle-market section* can be influential in understanding and therefore heightening of focus by law enforcement. Organizations like the 'Ndrangheta are especially active in these sectors because of the lower risks

involved. The consequence of this lower level of risk in the sector makes for a situation in which the 'Ndrangheta gathers large funds in the cocaine market and thus these funds remain in the hands of an organization that is more focused on influence and power than the possession of luxury items.

The concept of delocalization used in this thesis and the consequences that this strategy by organized crime group in transnational transit-crime are again important in the way fractured markets evolve. By the way that the 'ndrine have used delocalization to divide labor within sections of the market is not only fruitful for their own benefit, it allows different groups to grow in importance. The way in which growth can be observed within cooperation by different 'ndrine as there are shifts of roles within these cooperation structures can be observed when looking at cooperation with foreign organized crime groups as well. The growth of importance of for example Albanian groups in the cocaine market can be attributed to the cooperation with the 'ndrine and the delocalization used by the 'ndrine. These evolutions within a fractured market are important to note when investigating and understanding the European cocaine market. This understanding stems from the notion that illegal markets are often not monopolized, as the notion of a monopolized cocaine market out rules shifting roles within that market. This demands a critical stance on criminology and criminal investigations as the centrality of this critical look has very real consequences on the whole of the understanding of the *oligopolistic sector* of the cocaine market. This can be observed when comparing the frames used by Italian law enforcement and the following of these frames by research institutes and media outlets. However it has real consequences for the appropriate manner of investigation by European law enforcement in general.

The transnational character of organizations like the 'Ndrangheta and their activities also shows the way that cooperation between agencies is important. The idea of a fractured market and within this the use of *functional diversification* and *delocalization* by the 'ndrine evidences the need for international cooperation. The investigation of *transit-crime*, within an economic region that holds no real borders for the criminals involved, requires international cooperation like the illegal actors involved use. This is an effort needed to level the playing field between law enforcement and the illegal actors it wishes to stop. While this sounds fairly straight forward, there are real steps needed to be taken in the culture of law enforcement and the geopolitical power structures that hold this international cooperation back. This thesis is however, not the breaker of the cycles that is needed for this change of culture. One step in that process of internal cultural change can be the conclusion that certain frames used in law enforcement are not always conducive to the best approach in investigating organized crime.

I have hoped to show the way that *moral entrepreneurs* can have direct and sometimes negative influence over a discourse and therefore knowledge on certain criminological issues. While it is important to observe where this influence stems from, this thesis proves that it is needed to be critical on experts in the field. Following these experts without any critical stance can be detrimental to the knowledge on these subjects. There is more to expertise than the longevity of encountering certain criminological issues. There is more than one agenda and there are real criticisms to be placed on these experts. While it is important for law enforcement and criminology to research the same subjects and cooperate in an effort to help each other, the critical stance of criminology against law enforcement is imperative if there are steps to be made.

8.3 Deeper into the Rabbit Hole

While I have tried and hope to have succeeded in making a dent into this subject, the more overarching issues that I have tried to research are in my eyes underdeveloped. It would benefit studies of organized crime and therefore the understanding of facets of transnational cocaine trafficking organizations, mafias and mafia mobility if there are more researches that combine these facets. When looking critically at these subjects the outcome of the researches can be drastically different and therefore beneficial to society as a whole as well. Furthermore I do believe it important to be critical of discourses constructed by entities that are believed to be leading actors in the investigation and prosecution of organized crime groups, particularly when there is much unknown about the specific groups and activities. For further research I would therefore see real influence in a shift of paradigm within criminology as to the power that is laid in the hands of law enforcement and the way that that is influential in discourse surrounding organized crime. This is in my eyes a two sided argument in which both academia and the public sphere will benefit.

When looking at the way that I have researched this subject, there are certainly improvements to be made. For example, I think that deeper and more grounded methodologies like ethnographic research and interviews with these moral entrepreneurs would mitigate certain problems that I have encountered in my research. In this way the stance that I have can be further empowered but also negated when proven to be wrong. My personal context as a researcher has, rightly so, influenced the manner of research and conclusions that have been noted in this thesis. The perception of different researchers and different methods used may very well yield different results, which can only be an improvement to the debate. I would hope to be part of further researches into subjects that touch upon these and do think that this thesis does have a role it can play in seeing this issue in a different more critical light, when the possible improvements are taken into consideration.

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Appendix 1: List of Interviewed Experts

Experts list with their respective names (or anonymity), occupation, interaction, and date of interview here detailed

E1	Koen Voskuil – Crime expert of the RTL Nieuws and writer of the book <i>Maffiaparadijs. Een onthutsend beeld van de Italiaanse maffia in Nederland</i>	Face to Face Interview	29-9-2021
E2	Jan Meeus – Crime Expert of NRC and the maker of two NRC podcasts on the Dutch cocaine market	Face to Face Interview	12-4-2022
E3	Sanne de Boer – Dutch journalist living in Calabria and writer of the book <i>Mafiopoli</i>	Face to Face Interview	4-4-2022
E4	Member of the National Police of the Netherlands	Face to Face Interview	13-4-2022
E5	Letizia Paoli – Professor of Criminology at the KU Leuven with an expertise in organized crime and the Italian Mafia	Interview via the telephone	3-5-2022
E6	Investigative Journalist – Expertise in Latin American cocaine market	Face to Face Interview	12-5-2022
E7	Federico Varese – Professor of Criminology and head of Sociology at Oxford University with an expertise in mafia mobility and illegal governance	Face to Face Interview	24-5-2022

E8	Anna Sergi – Professor of Criminology at the University of Essex with an expertise in the 'Ndrangheta	Face to Face Interview	26-5-2022
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Appendix 2: List of used sources Discourse Analysis

Institute	Name	Date	Seminality
DIA	Relazione del Ministro dell'Interno al Parlamento sull'attività svolta e sui risultati conseguiti dalla Direzione Investigativa Antimafia	2007	2
DIA	Relazione del Ministro dell'Interno al Parlamento sull'attività svolta e sui risultati conseguiti dalla Direzione Investigativa Antimafia	2008	1
DIA	Relazione del Ministro dell'Interno al Parlamento sull'attività svolta e sui risultati conseguiti dalla Direzione Investigativa Antimafia	2017	1
DIA	Relazione del Ministro dell'Interno al Parlamento sull'attività svolta e sui risultati conseguiti dalla Direzione Investigativa Antimafia	2017	2
DIA	Relazione del Ministro dell'Interno al Parlamento sull'attività svolta e sui risultati conseguiti dalla Direzione Investigativa Antimafia	2018	1
DIA	Relazione del Ministro dell'Interno al Parlamento sull'attività svolta e sui risultati conseguiti dalla Direzione Investigativa Antimafia	2018	2
DIA	Relazione del Ministro dell'Interno al Parlamento sull'attività svolta e sui risultati conseguiti dalla Direzione Investigativa Antimafia	2019	1
DIA	Relazione del Ministro dell'Interno al Parlamento sull'attività svolta e sui risultati conseguiti dalla Direzione Investigativa Antimafia	2019	2
DIA	Relazione del Ministro dell'Interno al Parlamento sull'attività svolta e sui risultati conseguiti dalla Direzione Investigativa Antimafia	2020	1
DIA	Relazione del Ministro dell'Interno al Parlamento sull'attività svolta e sui risultati conseguiti dalla Direzione Investigativa Antimafia	2020	2
DIA	Relazione del Ministro dell'Interno al Parlamento sull'attività svolta e sui risultati conseguiti dalla Direzione Investigativa Antimafia	2021	1
DIA	Relazione del Ministro dell'Interno al Parlamento sull'attività svolta e sui risultati conseguiti dalla Direzione Investigativa Antimafia	2021	2
DIA	Relazione del Ministro dell'Interno al Parlamento sull'attività svolta e sui risultati conseguiti dalla Direzione Investigativa Antimafia	2022	1
DNA	Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore Nazionale Antimafia e dalla Direzione Nazionale Antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso.	2012	
DNA	Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore Nazionale Antimafia e dalla Direzione Nazionale Antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso.	2014	
DNA	Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore Nazionale Antimafia e dalla Direzione Nazionale Antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso.	2015	
DNA	Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore Nazionale Antimafia e dalla Direzione Nazionale Antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso.	2017	
DNA	Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore Nazionale Antimafia e dalla Direzione Nazionale Antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso.	2019	
DNA	Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore Nazionale Antimafia e dalla Direzione Nazionale Antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso.	2020	

DNA	Relazione annuale sulle attività svolte dal Procuratore Nazionale Antimafia e dalla Direzione Nazionale Antimafia nonché sulle dinamiche e strategie della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso.	2018	
Demoskopikas	'Ndrangheta has the same turnover as McDonalds and Deutsche Bank	2014	
Eurispes	Ndrangheta Holding 2008	2008	