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Miryam
Frickel

Is the Mafia a State Apparatus?

Migration Management in the
Mezzogiorno

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Author:

Miryam Frickel: miryam.fr@posteo.de

Editors:

Professor Dr. Christoph Scherrer

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Managing Editor: Nicole Magura magura@uni-kassel.de

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Kassel University

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Abstract

Starting from the relations of production, this paper examines the role of mafia for the preservation of social power and class relations in Sicily. To this end, the concept of the informal state apparatus is introduced. Following the approach of Critical Grounded Theory, this paper proposes to fill explanatory gaps in conventional mafia research by means of Nicos Poulantzas' historical materialist state theory. In-depth field research confirms the systematic generation of irregularity through conditions in which it is made almost impossible for many to obtain a regular residence permit and/or regular work. As the analysis shows, mafia adopts a complex role as an informal state apparatus: on the one hand, it functions as a scapegoat. On the other hand, it cushions conflicts and contradictions within the capitalist state. By examining mafia as an informal state apparatus, the dysfunctionality of migration management in the Mezzogiorno can be understood as an expression of statehood, rather than the absence of it.

1. Introduction

From the accommodation system for refugees¹ to the systematic procrastination of asylum applications scholars, politicians, media and activists often explain the dysfunctionality of migration management in the Mezzogiorno by mafia² influence. As neo-fascist Massimo Carminati, one of the bosses of *Mafia Capitale*, an organization that made billions in the migration sector, cynically put it in 2014: “Gli immigranti rendono più della droga“, migrants bring in more than drugs (Sironi 2014). New local and regional economies have grown in the south of Italy in recent years (Bartolini et al. 2020). Closely related to the reception of migrants and refugees is the implementation of various social and economic policies, for example health services and integration measures. The development of gigantic reception infrastructures, centers and camps of various kinds, and the emergence of numerous professions (such as social workers in the field of migration and in the administration) increase economic activity in the region. At the same time, sectors where labor planning is difficult, especially agribusiness, rely on extremely flexible and precarious labor: workers who are expendable to the rest of the market and willing to accept low wages. On closer inspection, the permanent crisis-ridden nature of the state's approach to migration fosters the emergence of gray areas that create further opportunities for profit.

Various investigations and reports scandalize that national and EU fundings are ending up with the mafia while the Italian state is usually portrayed as absent, helpless and weak (see e.g. Uessler 1991). This paper proposes a different reading of the phenomenon: it is not about an absence or failure of the state, but about its “problematic normality” (Pichl 2015). Migration and asylum policies create a framework in which mafia activity in this field becomes possible in the first place and crisis in migration management becomes a

¹ Refugees and applicants for asylum arrive in the region mainly via the central Mediterranean route from the African continent. Most arrivals land in the region of Sicily and the associated island of Lampedusa. Italy is cooperating with the Libyan coast guard and there are bilateral agreements with many North African countries.. In 2019, 11,471 refugees and migrants were documented reaching Italy via the central Mediterranean route (UN Refugee Agency 2020); in 2020, four times as many people arrived by September as in the same period last year (Auerbach et al. 2020). The specific processes of racialization within the migration- and reception system described in this paper mostly affect Black people.

² There is no uniform handling of the term and no precise definitional demarcation between international clans (Fundneider 2010: 28). Instead of “the mafia“ it would be more precise to speak of “mafias“. However, this paper identifies a specific interest group for the Italian context, which makes individual clan structures less relevant to the analysis. The fact that rivalries exist within the mafia and that it does not represent uniform interests per se is further elaborated in this paper.

permanent condition. It is not the only working area of mafia but one that overlaps with the state to a large extent. Right-wing populist migration policies and institutional racialization have been enforced for years. This is not a ‘problem of the South’ only. Mafia is often reduced to a parasitic organization docked to the state that otherwise would function perfectly, as scholars, lawyers, the media but also large parts of the anti-mafia movement assume. Instead, it must be integrated into state-theoretical considerations without trivializing it to better grasp its specific role in migration management³. Migration management that systematically violates humanitarian norms and applicable law, undermines labor protection and props up systems of exploitation must not simply be dismissed as a result of “organized crime“ for it is a mechanism within the state that needs to be better understood. This paper aims to investigate how mafia can be theorized as an organizational form of important interest groups vying for influence in the state and even as a state apparatus.

2. Methodology and Research Question

Based on these introductory considerations, this paper ties with the framework of materialist state theorist Nicos Poulantzas (2000/1978). If we understand state apparatuses as expressions of strategic processes and fields in which the interests of the classes are inscribed, social struggles in a specific region can be better understood by looking at a specific apparatus. Mafia does not simply fit into the classical distinction between repressive, ideological or economic state apparatuses as introduced by Poulantzas (ibid). I therefore suggest classifying the mafia as an *informal state apparatus*. Migration management in the Mezzogiorno can thus be examined as an expression of social power relations in the state. In terms of Critical Grounded Theory (Hauf/Befrage 2015), this research moves methodologically between conceptual and empirical work as “necessary steps for theory development“ (ibid.: 325).

The first part of the paper approaches the historic and discursive connection of mafia and state. I contrast the genesis of mafia in Sicily with narratives and imaginaries and scientific approaches. As I will show, there is major deficit that fails to reflect meaningful continuities.

³ The term “migration management“ indicates that politics and other levels of society intersect here and aspects of management such as the control, reception and integration of migration movements are involved.

This can be countered with historical-materialist state theory by Nicos Poulantzas, whose state-theoretical work offers an alternative approach in order to address the identified explanatory gaps. According to this view, the power and functions of individual state apparatuses, like the state itself, lie in a specific amalgamation of power relations between classes and class fractions. In the second part, I will empirically address the question and develop my argument considering specific indicators. My interest here is not to provide a conclusive definition neither of mafia nor of state apparatuses. Instead, following on from the observation of a professionalization of the mafia in the migration sector, this paper sheds light on aspects that the reviewed literature leaves out. One central concern is to explore mafia from the post-entry reality and everyday struggles of Sans-papiers, illegalized⁴ persons, people in the asylum process and those precariously employed. I consider them experts on the subject, and I am very lucky to have met people willing to talk to me. The interviews and participatory observations on reception structures, working conditions and mafia activity were obtained in 2016/2017 when I lived in Sicily, during later visits and a one-month research stay in 2020 which was marked by the coronavirus. The interviews and participant observations were made in Palermo as well as on trips to the surrounding area with activists, some of which were also attended by journalist friends. The focus is conditioned by my own encounters and experiences in the field as an activist. This so-called "strong participation" can provide very good insights into the field, but at the expense of analytical distance (Breidenstein et al. 2015: 67). Despite my role as an involved participant and the inevitable selectivity of the scenes perceived as a result, I still try to maintain some distance by keeping scenes brief and not describing my own (inter)actions. I started writing my thesis in 2020 so it was impossible to ask for permission to use the notes I took back then, which is why no full names are given in this paper. I only cite from interviews from 2016/2017 that were authorized to be published by journalists. The reviewed literature and documents are almost exclusively in Italian. In the past years I have been learning on various aspects of the migration and asylum regime as well as the anti-mafia sector in Italy on a professional but, above all, the private level. Accordingly, this paper was only possible thanks to the encounters with people affected by this system,

⁴ The term "illegalized" is used in this paper in place of categories such as "illegal" or "irregular" for people in order to denaturalize the reification that these terms imply. Illegality is spoken of in relation to unlawful practices that have nothing to do with citizenship and residence permits.

courageous activists and friends who are involved in the local fights for decent living and working conditions.

3. Mafia as an Instrument for Local Government

Named after the position of the sun, the term 'Mezzogiorno' refers to the regions south of Rome. When looking at the Italian state, regional differences in production relations still reveal a large north-south difference. The Mezzogiorno is shaped by agriculture and was massively exploited after the military Italian unification, as Italian operaismo (or: workerism, autonomist Marxism) has reappraised (Wright 2002, Bibliothek des Widerstands 2014).

Organized crime is usually blamed politically as a central reason for the low economic growth in the Mezzogiorno. Culturalist and orientalist stereotypes mystify the region as mafia-land and are fueled by films (such as "The Godfather"), series and other stories. Social and political life, as well as the sphere of work in the regions of the south, continue to be strongly shaped by the mafia in specific ways indeed. It is important to emphasize still that although most Italian clans originate in the region (the most powerful mafia clans are the Cosa Nostra from Sicily, the Camorra from Naples and Campania, and the 'Ndrangheta from Calabria), they are often widely connected and operate supraregionally. The fact that the mafia is now also active in the north is much less frequently addressed (Ufficio Stampa della Provincia Autonoma di Trento 2016). Meanwhile, the mafia's mode of operation has adapted to processes of political transformation in recent decades, and it has globalized its activities. Nevertheless, it is worth taking a closer look at its genesis in order to separate the concept from the imaginaries it resonates.

The Sicilian mafia was able to establish itself at the end of the 19th century as a counter-movement to the socialist *fasci*⁵ movement. The following overview is based on the research of the Centro Siciliano Documentazione "Giuseppe Impastato" in Palermo. The spread of the first mass socialist movement in Italy that advocated better payment, more job security, longer-term contracts and the redistribution of land was causal for the local expansion of the mafia.

⁵ *Fascio* translates as bundle or league. While the term was used in the late 19th century to refer to political groups of various orientations, today the meaning has been almost completely overwritten: The word *fascismo* or fascism derives from the *fasci italiani di combattimento* under Mussolini. The *fasci siciliani* have nothing to do with that.

The *fasci* movement managed to unite urban and rural populations, women and men in protest. It was threatening to those interest groups that profited from the existing economic and political system that a few years after the unification still had feudalist traits. *Gabellotti*, who were sometimes affiliated to already existing mafia organizations, leased land owned by the *latifondisti*, big landlords, at high interest rates and sometimes used violence to force the peasants to pay. The *gabellotti* were supported by the *guardie campestre*, private police corps, whose guards were often recruited from petty criminals and mafiosi and provided protection for the properties of the mayors and landowners close to them. At the end of 1893, demonstrations against tax increases climaxed in massive riots, and the movement spread rapidly and in a disorderly manner. The protests were quickly put down. According to calculations from 1895 (Colajanni quoted in Misuraca 2006), at least 92 demonstrators were killed and hundreds injured within a few days in December 1893. While some of the deaths can be attributed to the Italian military, a large part of the killings can be traced back to the *guardie campestre*, for which no one was held accountable. Those forces interested in maintaining the status quo, namely mafiosi, *gabellotti*, *campieri*, *latifondisti*, politics and the military, intentionally positioned themselves on 'the same side'. The *fasci* movement which was directed against class rule and exploitative relations was directly against the economic and violent oppression by the mafiosi. In a region where the grip of the state was rather low, the mafia seems to have been a powerful organ for the ruling classes to enforce their repressive interests and to secure control of labor relations. What is striking for further analysis is that the central government and fractions of capital from the North also had an interest in putting down the unrest.

Diego Tajani, former chief prosecutor at the Palermo Court of Appeal, said in a parliamentary debate as early as 1875: "The mafia in Sicily is neither dangerous nor invincible in itself. It is dangerous and invincible because it is an instrument of local government." (quoted in Dickie 2004: 73). Tajani's assessment is revealing in that the mafia is not considered an enemy of the state, but as a locally specific expression of ruling interests with specific techniques. Under Mussolini, the mafia was disempowered and the state took over the protection of large landowners. Trade union protests and cooperative organizations did not pose a threat for the mafia to intervene in during this phase. After the end of Italian fascism and the American invasion of Sicily in 1943, the mafia was able to take advantage of the politically unstable situation and pursued partly separatist goals. Many incidences document violence against workers' organizations and communists in the

following years (such as the infamous attack on Mayday celebrations in Piana degli Albanesi/ Sicily). From the 1960s onwards, the relationship between the mafia and politics shifted. The mafia was largely absorbed into the Christian Democratic Party, which was able to establish itself as the strongest party after the war and was in alliance with conservative parties and with the industrial bourgeoisie of the North and the landowners of the South (Pantaleone 1991). The Sicilian mafia was weakened after the famous maxi-trials against mafia members during the 1980s and the Tangentopoli investigations into political corruption in the 1990s, but, according to many experts, it has been able to reorganize itself in recent years. From the material presented, one motive can be deduced: the joint action against socialist movements and emancipatory struggles of the working class. The mafia was composed of members from various social classes who shared interest in maintaining or increasing private wealth and accordingly securing exploitative relations in the production process.

It is remarkable that social science debates on the mafia almost never refer to this aspect. There are hardly any current works in the reviewed literature that attempt to place individual cases in a broader social context and even fewer critical works on state theory that deal with the Sicilian mafia. Different disciplines provide different explanatory models, whereby the strong focus on criminology and organizational structure is striking. Of the analytical gaps in mafia studies, many can be traced back to failures to systematically illuminate and update the historical-material contexts. Mafia and state are predominantly presented as practically separate and analytically separable entities, whereby state responsibility is shifted onto the mafia as a “regional problem”. Accordingly, legal investigations are also often based on collective imaginaries that have analytical limits. While a certain idea of mafia is sought, those responsible fail to recognize other manifestations (see Giordano 2016 or Bodrero 2019). In migration management, this diffusion of responsibility is particularly evident because the field is highly specialized and thoroughly capitalized. A Senate analysis states: “Criminal organizations operate [...] as real business realities that aim to define and control every aspect of human migration” (Senato della Repubblica 2017: 35). The mafia as a criminal organization that tries to “define and control every aspect of migration” and the state on the other hand as the holder of the legitimate monopoly on the use of force and thus entitled to exercise control, are staged here as opponents. The performance of the mafia in Italian asylum policy and migration

management and its consequences will be examined in the following. For this purpose, we must first return to the starting point: the state. I would like to argue that materialist state theory, and specifically the work of Nicos Poulantzas, can contribute significantly to a deeper understanding of social, material, and spatio-temporal formations in the Mezzogiorno.

4. Integrating Mafia into State Theory

A state-theoretical approach to understanding the role of the mafia can be found in the work of the theorist Nicos Poulantzas. In his *State, Power, Socialism* first published in 1978 he rejects the distinction between society and state and describes the state, instead of starting from its tasks, struggles of the ruling forces among themselves and in relation to subaltern forces. According to Poulantzas, the state cannot appear as a unified actor. Rather it must be understood as disputed terrain on which struggles for political power take place. This approach unfolds a multidimensional view of social perspectives and their struggles by thinking together state theory, capitalism theory, and the analysis of forms of power and subjectivation. When the analysis of the state is approached from the social division of labour it brings into view the state as a “specific material condensation of a given relationship of forces, which is itself a class relation“ (1978: 73) and “a strategic field and process of intersecting power networks, which both articulate and exhibit mutual contradictions and displacements“ (1978: 136, 138). Poulantzas proposes to understand the capitalist state as a particular social relation: “a relation, more precisely, as the material condensation of a relation of forces between classes and class fractions, which is always expressed in specific form in the state” (ibid.: 259).

By placing the integral state at the center of his reflections on class struggle, Poulantzas develops an analysis of social reproduction of political, ideological and economic conditions that have an impact on the processes of accumulation. The state in its materiality takes separate shape from the relations of production, it has a “density and resilience of its own”, in this it is “relatively autonomous” and cannot be conceived as a mere class relation (Poulantzas 2000/1978: 26 ff 129 ff.). Consequently, Poulantzas understands the ensemble of ideological and repressive state apparatuses as separate from the economy (Poulantzas 2000/1978: 33). This separation is necessary to balance contradictions within the ruling

classes (Kannankulam 2018: 41). State apparatuses can be understood as both field and object of class struggles. In that sense, the state is the material framework of apparatuses and their inherent institutions. The unity of the apparatuses is crucial for the ability of states to provide social cohesion within them.

Although in Poulantzas' terminology it can be argued, on reasonable grounds, that Sicily could be interpreted as a feudal or peripheral state (cf. Poulantzas 1977/1975), I would like to counter that the economy in the Mezzogiorno especially with regard to migration management has developed in a capitalist direction in a specific way precisely as part of the Italian state (and the European Union). Periphery is instrumentalized and integrated into capitalist circuits, as I will explain in more detail. This paper's research question does not aim at differences between the central state and the Mezzogiorno. Rather, the Mezzogiorno and Sicily are to be grasped as a region with special characteristics precisely in their integration into the bourgeois, capitalist state. Signs can be found in the specific structure of migration movements and in migration policies that have released money flows that have contributed to the capitalization of certain sectors. Importantly "the direct producers are entirely dispossessed of the object and means of their labour" (Poulantzas 2000/1978: 18), a characteristic of capitalist states. This assessment is confirmed empirically in the consideration of the modes of production in the Mezzogiorno in the following section of the analysis.

At this point, it can be stated that, with Poulantzas, the idea of an antagonism between mafia and state conceptually makes no sense. If 'THE' state does not exist, but instead contradictory and fragmented ensembles of state apparatuses (Buckel 2018: 51), the question of how 'it' relates to the mafia is also superfluous. More interesting is the question of whether the mafia, which, as shown previously, can in fact be understood as an expression of social power relations itself, forms a state apparatus in its organized shape. I would like to suggest that as a state apparatus the mafia overdetermines other priorities in the policy field of asylum and migration management while the relations of production in Italy and especially in the Mezzogiorno are massively conditioned by the migration system (Palumbo/Corrado 2020).

5. Is the Mafia a State Apparatus?

5.1 Some remarks on the Operationalization

It is difficult to transfer Nicos Poulantzas' theory of the state as a theoretical model of contemporary society. Poulantzas himself criticized such an approach as “dogmatic formalism“ (Poulantzas 2000/1978: 158) for it is precisely the changing structures and functions, strategies and forms of power that make up the state as the result of the material compression of power relations. The difficulty here points to the more general one - to what extent historical-materialist concepts can be operationalized. Certainly, it is not the yes-or-no answer that I am interested in but that of what follows once we recognize the mafia as a state apparatus. The structure of the empirical part gives an approach to how mafia could be confronted analytically. Yet, one might argue that to conceptualize state apparatuses based only on some characteristics already implies that the mafia *is* a state apparatus. I will address this by further developing Poulantzas' terminology. This very simplification opens new views both on the concept of mafia as on migration management and thus sets different priorities than previous approaches. In this sense, entering the field by making it accessible for a historical-materialistic critique is the first step at opening the debate.

By definition, mafia as a criminal group operates largely independent of other apparatuses simply because of the informality of its control mechanisms and mode of operation. Yet, due to its fundamentally authoritarian character and the permanent crisis of southern Italian migration management, it takes on a complex role in the state and is perfectly integrated into its authoritarian-statist reorganization. It does not fit into the classic distinction between repressive and ideological state apparatuses tracing back to Althusser (1977) and taken up by Poulantzas who added the economic apparatus. Rather, it lies across all three categories. Consequently, a conceptual neologism must be introduced at this point: the informal state apparatus. It combines aspects from all three apparatuses but additionally absorbs regional contradictions and the hegemonic instability of the different fractions of capital by combining interests that would otherwise probably not form an alliance because of their role in the relations of production. The conflicts that, according to Poulantzas' analysis, challenge the classical alliance between the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie in the course of the authoritarian-etatist reorganization can be mitigated by the mediating role of the mafia, as the following aspects suggest.

Qualitative field research based on Poulantzas framework gives an idea of *how* it does that. I therefore emphasize certain aspects without claiming the general validity of a definition. I will focus on two main aspects here that are (among others) significant for state apparatuses and create meaningful categories for the analysis.

(I) The apparatuses, branches and networks of the state have relative autonomy themselves vis-à-vis other apparatuses (Poulantzas 2000/1978: 134 ff.). Relative autonomy itself is composed of different components, the following will be regarded: (1) structural selectivity, (2) conflicting decisions or non-decisions and signs of filtration, (3) priority determination and counter-priorities of the apparatus(es) and (4) a complex of selective, conflicting and compensatory measures.

(II) By including contradictory and mobile tactics “whose general objective and institutional crystallization” manifest themselves in their form as a state apparatus (ibid.: 136), it is possible within Poulantzas' terminology to focus on a process, which he largely omits: the process of civil society generalization and elaboration of consensus in which a group generates consent through its leadership practices. The emphasis on this aspect points to the influence of Antonio Gramsci's conception on hegemony. For the field of study, this leads to mechanisms that do not result directly from Poulantzas' explanations but prove to be central in the field: The dimensions of racialization take on a decisive ideological effect in the balance of power and must explicitly be considered in their gendered dimension.

First, however, I would like to briefly outline the context in which migration management in Italy takes place.

5.2 Contextualizing Migration Management

Italian migration policy is embedded in a broader European context which is characterized by the comprehensive expansion of repressive elements of the European border regime (Buckel et al. 2017: 11). According to the UNHCR, the Mediterranean is the world's deadliest sea route (UNHCR 2019). In 2015, the number of crossings increased sharply, deaths and missing persons rising with an even higher number of unreported cases. Rescue missions have been systematically criminalized in recent years, deportations have increased, and comprehensive reforms have massively restricted the right to asylum. This

has been attributed mainly to the restrictive policies of the right-wing populist coalition of Lega and the Movimento Cinque Stelle in Italy and the EU (Human Rights Watch 2019). However, many measures were already enacted by the previous governments and continue to be applied (ibid.). Accordingly, the “policy of closed ports“, which is often personalized with ex- Minister of the Interior Matteo Salvini, must be seen in line with previous decisions as contributing to the categorization of people (Soumahoro 2019), evident in the dominance of certain apparatuses.

In the field of migration management, large sums of EU and national funds have been released in the wake of increased numbers of refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea. Before the 2018 reform, reception structures in Italy were divided into a dual system with different administrative structures. The SPRAR (*Servizi Protezione Richidenti Asilo e Rifugati*; engl. Services for the Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees) were operated by municipal offices in cooperation with the third sector, like NGOs, so-called social cooperatives and charitable institutions. The contracts for the operation of these structures were regulated awarding public tenders through the municipalities. They have been replaced almost entirely by CAS (*Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria*; engl. Extraordinary Centres of Refuge) which are managed by private service providers. The awarding of contracts is regulated by the prefectures, which act as representatives of the Ministry of the Interior in the regions. First aid and reception centers (CPSA), which were introduced in 2006 for the purpose of first aid and identification, now formally function as hotspots whose primary aim is to identify so-called "economic refugees" more quickly and to deport them more directly via departure centers (CIE) (see eg. proasyl.de). National reception mechanisms as administrative instruments distinguish between persons who are classified as irregular on arrival and those who have access to the asylum procedure and are entitled to stay, at least temporarily. The very process of reception can also lead to irregularities (Bartolini et al. 2020). Groups and individuals move between legal, political and economic systems that often intertwine and define both opportunities and obstacles for them: Without an identity card, it is not possible to open a bank account or rent a flat in Italy. Because it is a crime to be an "illegal migrant", even ordinary activities such as working, travelling, demonstrating and imagining and actively striving for a better life have become "illegal" acts. In October 2020, some regulations of the *decreti sicurezza* (security decrees) were again overturned by decree. Yet, Italy's border policy, which is demonstratively geared

towards sealing off and criminalization, including the arrest of the rescue boat Sea-Watch 4 in Palermo in September 2020, seems to continue to correspond to the European policy of sealing off the EU's external borders, even if the penalties for rescue at sea were reduced (not abolished) in 2020. The system is characterized by the contradiction between restrictive migration laws and weak internal control, between criminalization of "illegal" migration and the employment of migrants in so-called "underground economies" (Menin 2017). In this structure, the mafia could have established itself as a state apparatus and become dominant in the field of migration. The extent to which its presence and interests reflect in contradictory state action will be examined now.

5.3 The Relative Autonomy of the Mafia

Notes from the Field

Generally speaking, the mafia does not like to be explored. However, in 2014 the Mafia Capitale investigation in Rome provided profound insights into the systematics of a huge network that earned billions, especially with reception structures for refugees. What Poulantzas calls the "structural selectivity" of a state apparatus shall offer first access by focusing on the historical and materialist dimension as well as specific special interests. The said investigation, also known as the "mondo di mezzo" (in-between world), uncovered the existence of an organization in Rome that was problematically referred to as "new mafia".⁶ The public prosecutor's office in Rome defines the "Mafia Capitale" as:

"(...) a criminal organization as dangerous as it is complex, which, to use the words of one of its most influential and dangerous representatives, Massimo Carminati (the pirate or the cecato), operates above all in an in-between world [in the Italian original: mondo die mezzo], a place where, due to the power and authority of the 'Mafia Capitale', criminal synergies are realized and illegal balances between the world above, made up of white-

⁶ The term seems misleading in that it does not sufficiently reflect the personal overlaps and interest connections to "traditional" mafia groups, on which part of the authority of this "new" mafia is based. The emergence of the so-called "new mafia", which at the same time has many of the characteristics of "typical" mafia organizations, again concretely raises the problem of legal comprehensibility, which is concretely reflected in the decision of the Court of Cassation. Thus, in the last instance, the ruling on "Mafia Capitale" was overturned: The "Mafia Capitale" is an ordinary criminal organization and not of a mafia type, according to the ruling. This paradoxical explanation met with much criticism, because the sentences are massively reduced by this assessment.

collar criminals, companies and institutions, and the world below, made up of robber batteries and drug traffickers and groups operating illegally with weapons, whose leaders deal simultaneously, almost always in a superior position, with the highest representatives of the intelligence services, members of the forces of law and order, with the historical leaders of the traditional criminal organizations based in the capital, and with street criminals“ (Tribunale di Roma, 2014: 281).

Specific selection mechanisms and interests of the network can be identified, although it covers different social positions. Even though the association is portrayed as apolitical in many representations, the presence of neo-fascist personalities is conspicuous. For example, the network of the “Mafia Capitale“ gathered parts of neo-fascist militancy (such as the aforementioned Massimo Carminati, one of the bosses of the association and a neo-fascist ex-terrorist) and right-wing politicians who have institutional contacts at various levels (ibid.). For example, the former neo-fascist mayor of Rome, Gianni Alemanno, was convicted for his involvement in Mafia Capitale. The defendants are predominantly white and male (only six of the 48 defendants have names that read female). The importance of masculinity ideologies and networks can be included at this point as an indicator of the existence of specific special interests and connections (Rakopoulos 2020). The materiality of the state in the form of its state apparatuses establishes the relationship between domination and subordination. It manifests itself in the separation and specialization of the state apparatuses in relation to the production process and the distinction between intellectual and manual labour. According to Poulantzas, the apparatuses are responsible for the “practical supremacy of a knowledge and a discourse" from which "the popular masses" are excluded (Poulantzas 2000/1978: 56). For centuries, mafia was invoked as a structuring force by conservative forces, especially to oppose socialist movements. An immense agrarian bloc, acting as “intermediaries and overseers“ (Gramsci 1978/1926: 17) of northern capitalism and the big banks, had as its overriding goal the preservation of the status quo. The virtual absence of a strong central state that could have acted against the organization of socialist interests and demands meant that landowners and managers of larger agricultural estates continued to turn to the mafia: “Over the 60 years and more that followed the flowering of the Fasci movement, Mafiosi would intimidate and murder countless socialists, Communists and trade union leaders – so many, in fact, that it came to seem as if the Mafia’s very purpose was to batter the organized working class in the

countryside into submission” (Dickie 2004: 136). For centuries, the mafia was invoked as a structuring element by conservative forces, especially in order to suppress socialist movements. Very concrete continuities can be found in Sicily, when in 2019 the *Presidente della Regione* (President of the Region) Nello Musumeci calls for the “necessity of *guardie campestre*”, as “a group of guards who know the area well and go around armed and stop suspicious people” and stop “illegality in the countryside” (L'opinione della Sicilia 2019). Where once the mafia was called upon to put down the *fasci* movement, here, Musumeci suggests taking action against migrants. With this comment he relativizes the historical role of violent corps and ultimately pleads for a lawless space.

“Inconsistency of decision-making processes as well as ‘non-decisions’, of state action” and filtration shall serve as a further focus point. In a small town in Sicily, infamous for its strong local mafia structures, the local CAS is run by a so-called ‘social cooperative’⁷, which also runs care homes. M.L. from Gambia reports on the conditions in the vacant hotel converted into a CAS, where he has been living for half a year: “There is only water sometimes. They turn the water on twice a day, in the morning and in the evening for two hours, there is no hot water. The men boil water on a gas cooker outside when they want to wash. Often the heating fails”. 65 men from Gambia, Nigeria, Mali, the Ivory Coast, Bangladesh and Tunisia occupy the twenty or so rooms of the former hotel and often wait several years for an asylum decision. The disregard for the religious rules of the almost exclusively Muslim residents also illustrates the discriminatory mismanagement by the cooperative which at the time (2016) receives 30 to 35 euro per person per day from the Italian state and EU funds to run the center. In one week, that is about 15,000 euros. The fact that millions of euros in private profits are being made in the reception system, which could be used for better service provision, does not seem to have led to any consequences so far in terms of appropriate restructuring and political decisions. Instead, the restructuring of the reception system in recent years represents a privatization measure that has further lowered the standards of accommodation and privileged the awarding practices of those private companies that can open large structures. The states’ investigative Antimafia agency

⁷ Mafia Capitale operated largely through a network of social cooperatives (*cooperative sociale*) too. Market-oriented so-called social cooperatives attract business people and employees and have practices that are very similar to capitalist enterprises and can be characterized by a lack of internal democracy, competitive logic, cost-cutting and forms of mistreatment of workers (wage cuts, unstable labour contracts) (Martone 2017, Corbisiero et al. 2009). This is not an Italian phenomenon. However, what sets it apart from similar organizations is that it is accompanied by other illegal phenomena, such as tax evasion, undeclared work, illegal hiring and lack of application of collective agreements (Pelos 2013).

reports note that contracting decisions are made “largely autonomously” and that these decisions are hardly controlled due to the confusing distribution of CAS (accommodation structures) and mafia-like infiltration within the authorities (DIA 2016).

In the local area, further examples can be found in which state apparatuses are conspicuous above all for their inaction. Asylum applications are sometimes not processed for years and those affected are deliberately kept in a status of uncertainty. Some prefer to earn at least a bit of money rather than just wait with the prospect of deportation, others go underground after their application is rejected. One sector that can largely benefit from this is agriculture, where primarily but not exclusively illegalized migrants or asylum seekers, waiting for the lengthy processing of their applications’ work (Palumbo/Corrado 2020). Hundreds or thousands of harvesters often live in informal camps because they cannot rent flats in the villages and/or they do not want to or cannot spend the little money they have on rent. One such camp is located near Campobello di Mazara, a region with many olive groves in western Sicily. In the tent city, with its own roads and huts and camping tents, improvised from plastic sheets, there is no hot water. During the harvest season, over a thousand people live here and hope for work anew every day: “I pick olives from 6 am to 4 pm and get paid 30€ a day. It is hard work and we have to compete to get it. But what else can I do? There is nothing else. I don't have any documents. I came here to Europe 10 years ago to look for work and a better life” (F. N., personal interview, Campobello di Mazara, 2016).

A 42-year-old man from Senegal says that every morning at 5 am hundreds of men walk into town to be selected each day by farmers or so-called *caporali*. Caporali are middlemen who illegally hire workers on a daily or weekly basis at most, disregarding workers' rights and rules of employment. Filling a crate takes about an hour for skilled workers. Farmers start low, at 2€, and slowly go up: most are willing to work for 2.50€ per crate. Because they have no legal protection whatsoever, it happens that they do not get paid at the end of the day. It is striking that authorities know about the existence of these camps but deliberately do not carry out any controls, although “illegality” is a criminal offence under Italian law. State inaction contributes to the preservation of certain production conditions.

Taking “priority determination and counter-priorities“ in view leads the focus on migration policy. Since it is hardly possible for applicants with ongoing asylum procedures to pursue regular work, and since the processing of applications often takes years and has little chance of success, many of those waiting are driven into irregular employment. The

dominance of the mafia in agriculture, construction and generally the low-wage sector has so far been strongly marked by the fact that except for the local left and anti-racist social movements, there has been no expression at the political level strong enough to attack the ruling capital factions in the power bloc. The strict Corona restrictions and controls in Italy have made it almost impossible for agricultural workers without a work contract to move freely. Seasonal workers from EU countries could not enter the country. Accordingly, the harvest initially collapsed during the first lockdown. The work of the mafia-like caporali, which in some areas of the Mezzogiorno kept the recruitment, transport and accommodation of agricultural workers almost completely under control, was also made impossible. However, police controls in the affected areas were soon massively relaxed so that the labour shortage of Eastern European workers could be compensated by irregular workers (Palumbo/Corrado 2020: 9). The lack of labour inspectorate controls has thus contributed to an increase in irregular employment. In May 2019, the government passed a scheme to formalize “irregular employment”, planned as an economic stimulus “after” the pandemic. These regularizations were limited in time to one harvest season and thus guarantee regularized labour in the sector only in the short term. Instead of structural interventions, these temporary and selective regularizations serve to maintain production chains and set clear priorities. For specific sectors, the role of undocumented workers has great socio-economic importance and can be interpreted as a factor for priority setting. However, in the Italian state there are authorities that by definition pursue counter-priorities to those of the mafia. Their stated purpose is to uncover and thwart the activities of the mafia. The state's investigative anti-mafia agency, the DIA, illustrates the contradictory nature of various interests in the state. On a closer look, the focus of research and the results of investigations today largely correspond to the right-wing populist policies of the past years and today focus primarily on “clandestine immigration” and “cooperation between foreign mafia clans and the Italian mafia” (DIA 2019). In summary, in contrast to other conceivable orientations of state migration policy, specific priorities can be identified that have strong economic weighting and coincide with mafia activities. The tightening and militarization of the European external borders with the aim of preventing people from entering and reducing the number of arrivals follows not only national but European priorities, to which money flows are linked. At the same time, securing irregular labour seems to be of great importance for production chains, especially in the agricultural sector during the Corona pandemic, and is reflected in state policy. The continuation of the current

production system is in the interest of relevant capital fractions, which also continue to have considerable support in the national and regional space and are of national importance, as illustrated by demand and food prices during the lockdown.

Finally, a “complex of contradictory, conflictual and compensatory measures” hints at processes with limited or no follow-ups. In many local cases, corruption and mismanagement of reception-centers for migrants are documented and followed only by contradictory measures. One example is Misericordia, a religious association/charity from Calabria which is under investigation by the Antimafia agency since the first half of 2017, under whose management unacceptable conditions in reception centres and the misappropriation of funds have been documented in numerous cases. Nevertheless, it was (and still is in parts of the country) repeatedly awarded contracts. On Lampedusa that was the case even after one of the centres it had been managing had already been closed due to unsustainable management (for more details on this case, see Friese 2014). An interview with the assistant to the mayor of Lampedusa conducted by Anna Sergi and Giacomo Orsini illustrates my point:

“I collected several evidences of the institutional commitment to suspend the rule of law in Lampedusa with the excuse of the border Many of the members of the last municipal administration [. . .] committed serious irregularities during their mandate. [After years of protests from locals] the provincial authority nominated an inspector who had the power of resolving the local administration in case she detected any irregularity.[. . .] After [. . .] more than two years of investigation, the inspector finally published a report where she denounced the administration’s numerous criminal offences –mainly related to corruption. However, she concluded her report with what [. . .] summarizes perfectly the relation between the border emergency and the rule of law on this island. [...] Reading from the original report: ‘Given that the administration demonstrated the ability to maintain good relations and efficient cooperation with national and Communitarian authorities [. . .] during the serious emergency of 2011 [. . .] I nominate a superintendent’. This meant that she recorded irregularities and yet, she decided not to take any legal actions against local administrators. [Instead, she] nominated a superintendent [who is] an unclear and unspecified legal figure [in the Italian legal system. As she reported, the superintendent role was] ‘to remove the irregularities carried out by the administration.’ [...] Over the two

months the superintendent spent in Lampedusa, he did not take any single action against the former administration.” (Orsini/ Sergi 2018: 8, brackets from original).

Often there are no consequences even though a problem is clearly identified, measures undermine each other, they seem cosmetic instead of stimulating comprehensive reforms. This could be because none of the institutional forces feels secure enough to give away the other(s). Above all, examples show the ambivalence of the state institutions (like provincial governments), which have to act in some way to remain credible which they do by appointing an inspector and eventually a superintendent. At the same time, as in the case of vast mismanagement of a structure on the Sicilian island of Lampedusa any effects remain absent (“he did not take a single measure”, *ibid.*), although a deployed inspector even has the power to dissolve the administrative structures. In various examples, state measures are introduced to gain credibility, but they remain selective and conflictual and do not touch structures, but sometimes create the ‘emergency’ itself. Other measures have symbolic significance. The state's dealings with the mafia and the corresponding measures have a selective character. In dealing with the mafia, cases are individualized and tied to individual personalities, as the example of ‘Mafia Capitale’ shows. As theorist Sara Ahmed notes about institutional power: “It is difficult to make an institution the subject of the complaint because the complaint is handled by that institution itself.” (Ahmed 2019). Applied to the capitalist system, it can similarly be observed here that measures such as investigations against state apparatuses or power groups themselves often have a compensatory effect and structures are often not touched, while problems, responsibility and consequences are individualized.

Relative Autonomy

In summary, the mafia can be described as relatively autonomous. Its relative autonomy is evident in specific principles of form and structure that make it largely resistant to shifts in the relation of forces or even likely to benefit from them. The administration of reception structures and the irregular labour market are largely free of controls by official state apparatuses. The mafias’ autonomy is comprehensive and not seriously countered which points either to the weakness of other apparatuses and/ or to extensive overlaps of capital interests. Structural selectivity confirms the reactionary orientation of their efforts for the

interests it represents are very specific. For the field of migration management, however, it is not enough to look for classic *modus operandi* of the mafia through which it exercises local power and domination: it also operates in areas that are classically not in its domain, and in this it reveals a stronger professionalization, structuring and expansion into bureaucracy, whereby its materiality remains diffuse and informal, for it does not appear officially. The restructuring of migration policy, which must be seen in the context of the previous political line, opens up additional room for maneuver in every area of migration management and gives rise to new economies. Administrative structures are just as affected as informal sectors. Local specifics play a decisive role, which also reproduce the power of the mafia ideologically. State inaction is reflected in the tolerance of dehumanizing conditions in both the reception system and the informal labour market. At the same time, state decisions in this area help to (re)create them. The mafia's flexibility and relative autonomy become apparent in its handling of current migration movements, in which it reacts to newly released money flows and uses its networks, alliances and personal interests accordingly, which are underpinned by social support, political power and resources, especially financial ones. Regarding informal labour relations, the contradictory nature of migration legislation is striking. The creation of irregularity seems to have been accepted by the state and/or intended by certain actors. This also reveals systematic state inaction. In view of global value chains, some sectors are dependent on the reproduction of exploitable labour as a labour market strategy. This dynamic holds especially true for agricultural supply chains that are characterized by very low wages. The German market is one of the main destinations for Italian fruit and vegetables. Counter-priorities have not been discernible in the political field so far; migration legislation by the state and migration management by the mafia seem largely synchronous.

I have argued that the mafia lies across all three apparatuses named by Poulantzas. While political and economic aspects of its activity (as well as some of its repressive power) in migration management have become quite evident, the elements of an ideological state apparatus have so far remained less clear. In the following section I would like to focus more on the mafia's ideological role.

5.4 Racialization

The areas of mafia activity, especially in the migration sector, are structured in such a way that they tend to conceal contradictions in the southern Italian class society and distinguish it from the racialized parts of society.

State apparatuses are characterized by contradictory and mobile tactics “whose general aim and institutional crystallization” are manifested in their form as state apparatus (Poulantzas 2000/1978: 136). Tactics are understood here as applied means to implement a (political, economic or ideological) strategy. Strategies for the unification of the capital sides and in the class struggle would fall under this as well as splitting mechanisms that prevent the solidarization of marginalized groups. The participation of an apparatus in the unity of the state and in the reproduction of mechanisms of unification and division can be better understood under this aspect. In addition, the dimension of mafia violence comes into focus. By crystallization I understand the material condensation of tactics. I use the term “racialization”⁸ here instead of sticking to Poulantzas' terminology: while Poulantzas elaborates on the nation and its mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion (2000/ 1978: 94 ff.) I would like to argue, that in the south of Sicily precisely not nationalism is at work. On the contrary, in the region there exist forms of rejection of the Italian nation state across all generations. There is no strong identification with the Italian national state in Sicily. Consequently there are different dividing lines created that focus less on the idea of a nation but rather on purported cultural differences or whiteness/non-whiteness.

The terminological attachment to the nation creates conceptual but also analytical limits for the analysis of racialization processes, seem to have effects beyond nations. In fact, in the Mezzogiorno racialization supports the social backing for migration management that dehumanizes those affected and exposes them to super-exploitation. National and European instruments for managing migration give new social and economic meaning to territories: Political and institutional racism are not exclusively but to a great extent the result of migration policies and stigma-generating instruments. It manifests itself in migration policy, in the administrative structures of reception centers, in labour relations, but also in a

⁸ Racism and racialization, like sexism, are anchored in capitalism in their socially constructed forms of exploitation and domination. On the other hand, it must be assumed that these relations of power and domination continue to exist even without capitalism, which is why they must not be assigned the role of a secondary contradiction. The fact that they are understood here as “tactics” in relation to relations of production moves in a line of argument with Poulantzas and makes no claim to a theory of racism. The term “tactics” is not meant to relativize the inherent violence.

social climate of atomization and mistrust, which is due, among other things, to decades of mafia presence. The categories of ‘migrant’ and ‘migrant woman’ create dispositifs that set economic, social and cultural barriers for millions of people. In this context, Aboubakar Soumahoro speaks of categorization as a cultural process with socio-political and economic effects (2019). The political and public discourse seem to accept social discrimination and invisibility. Political scientist Alessandra Corrado (2011) states that local racism is deeply rooted in the subculture of the mafia: since the 1990s, more people from the sub-Saharan region have been coming to the Mezzogiorno alongside seasonal workers from the Maghreb. Since then, anti-black racism, robberies of migrant workers, threats and racist attacks have increased (Palidda 2015).⁹ Workers report “unprecedented ultra-racist violence” as early as the 1990s and an atmosphere of fear that forces them to live in ghettos (interview, cited in Corrado 2011: 198). That was more than 20 years ago, during which conditions have become rather entrenched and numerous acts of racist violence have been documented. In 2016, a young Senegalese man recounts similar experiences as a harvester in Sicily: “We try to talk to the Italians here in town, but they don't care. Sometimes you are angry, but you can't do anything else; this is the only work for us” (Personal interview, Campobello di Mazara, 2016).

The CAS in the hills of the Madonie in Sicily is particularly isolated. The next village is an hour's walk away. The road is not lit at night, there are holes in the asphalt. The former hotel is located at 1100 meters high, about two hours from Palermo. It was out of operation for a long time, but now about 100 people live there again, sometimes six people sleep in double bunk beds. For many of the men waiting here for their papers, the chances are slim; most applications will be rejected. Aid organizations only come by every few months. The administrative structures are opaque, all services for the residents are cut. Although medical care and legal aid, Italian courses and clothing should be guaranteed, not even a minimum of these is provided. In 2016, the residents formulate their protest: they demand reliable internet as their only means of communication, running water at all hours, warm clothes, shampoo. The reaction of the administration follows a few days later: thirteen young men from Gambia are literally put on the street for their non-violent protest. People's systematic experience of meaninglessness eventually prevents their rebellion.

⁹ A comprehensive documentation of racist attacks can be found in the database of *Cronache di ordinario razzismo*, *Cronicles of ordinary racism* (2020).

Legal provisions are supported and legitimized by stigmatizing through symbolic practices and rhetoric, contributing to the dissolution of social bonds and a functional reorganization of hierarchies aimed at a “differentiating inclusion” (Corrado, 2011: 193 ff.) of migrants. This should not give the impression that there were no support structures. On the contrary, vivid civil society and advocacy groups do exist, and their work must be acknowledged. The *Unione Sindacale di Base*, USB, the grassroots union of seasonal workers and day labourers, has been fighting against extortion and exploitation since 2010, *Arci Porco Rosso* is a political collective in Palermo where local activists, migrants and *Sans-papiers* work together here and share their expertise reciprocally, and intellectual and activist Aboubakar Soumahoro emphasizes a class perspective in the public debate on working conditions for migrants, just to name some. But social movements and workers' protests often lack broader support among the population. This is also because the struggles of Black people are not perceived by many as “their own”.

In “Whiteness as property”, lawyer Charyl Harris (1993) argues that in the United States the law protects citizens' whiteness as a right, which leads whites to seek to protect this status, for it has become a valuable commodity (ibid.: 1713). While her argument is related to the very specific US context, a line can be drawn to relations of domination in Europe in relation to its colonial past. The relationship between the concept of race and property reflects how these specific property rights have developed into historical forms of domination that reproduce the subordination of populations in the present. Harris argues that the common core is found above all in the right to exclusion. This exclusion takes place juridically in Europe as well: the interaction between notions of citizenship and property plays a crucial role in creating and maintaining racist and economic subordination. Following on from the observation that the mafia secures existing power and property relations of the ruling class following Harris, racism can be seen as one of its tactics. Racism forms the ideological foundation for the mafia's migration management and can also be seen as another function of the mafia in the state.

Gender is another yet connected divisive mechanism, which is why I would like to discuss it in this chapter. Mafia itself is a thoroughly gendered phenomenon. Few women are represented in the networks, which are misogynous in both their historical and current materiality (Rakopoulos 2020). The gender dimension of migration is a particularly complex factor that shapes the specificities of the “Mediterranean model” (Pugliese 2011).

The number of female migrants has been increasing in Italy in recent years. Often, poverty and lack of access to education and work are reasons for the journey across the Mediterranean. But patriarchal and sometimes radicalized systems also drive especially women, non-binary and trans people to flee. On the routes, they are particularly vulnerable and, in many cases, become (re-)victims of sexualized violence and abuse. This is confirmed by activists of the organization *Donne di Benin City* in Palermo, founded by former Nigerian sex workers and forced prostitutes, who advise young women with migration experience and victims of human trafficking in a free consultation hour. Black women suffer particularly from stigmatization and racism: “More than half of the foreign population in Italy is made up of women who face double discrimination: as migrants and as women. And thus they are subjected to an even more difficult integration process because they are exposed to violence, exploitation, abuse and underpaid work”, describes Rossella Benedetti, lawyer of the *Differenza Donna* association (Benedetti 2018): “Gender roles influence the social integration of migrant and refugee women and the way they can contribute to and benefit from the host societies. (...) Moreover, a woman dies every 60 hours due to male violence and welfare policies are implemented that further restrict the very structures that are lynchpins of the struggle for women's rights, such as anti-violence centres.” Activists stress the importance of strengthening a reception system that takes a gender-sensitive approach. Women, non-binary and trans people often flee for different reasons than (cis) men and experience multidimensional discrimination that is perpetuated in host societies where equality and the fight against gendered violence are patchy. Migrant and refugee women are often even less recognized as active subjects for these reasons. The exercise of power over Black bodies in combination with misogynist models of behaviour and thinking based on the objectification of female bodies reinforce the phenomenon. The fact that large populations are forced accept forms of exploitation ranging from unprotected labour to the commodification of the body can be seen as a result. The connotation of the debate on human trafficking in Italy focuses strongly on foreign mafia groups (cf. DIA 2019), which in turn leads to the stigmatization of women from Nigeria in particular. Investigators rarely confront the relationship between the local mafia and new criminal groups in human trafficking and forced prostitution. There is hypothesis-like talk of “protection” that the local mafia could exert and transfer to the incoming mafias due to their social capital, profit-sharing and agreements. However, this research is hardly explored in depth (Santino 2017). Apparently, there is a massive knowledge deficit in the

field. In a climate of religious taboos and a male-dominated public sphere, chauvinism and forms of modern slavery are reproduced. Overall, it can be stated that there is a certain institutional blindness to the gender-specific dimension of violence in the migration sector. This blindness is reinforced by racist stigmatizations and externalizations, which as mechanisms of division need more attention in debates on state theory.

The commodification of Black bodies is made possible, above all, by the systematic racism shaped by migration policy and migration management (through CIEs, digital fingerprints and entry quotas just to name a few aspects) and benefits different actors. On different levels, capital interests can profit from the socio-cultural production of differences and stereotypes: the exploitation of 'foreign bodies' works better when they are unorganized. Racialization is reflected in migration policy, in the administrative structures of reception centers, in labour relations, but also in a social climate of atomization and mistrust, which can be traced back to decades of mafia presence.

6. The Mafia as an Informal State Apparatus

The exploitation of all aspects of migration by the mafia is only made possible by legislation that creates grey areas. Problematizing this as part of state normality becomes possible only by theorizing the mafia as part of it. At the same time, as a state apparatus, it is itself the content of state politics. In this respect it assumes a multiple role within the state. The mafia as an informal state apparatus secures itself through various mechanisms and intercepts various conflicts and contradictions. By systematically creating irregularity through conditions in which regular residence and/or regular work are almost impossible, state policies favour the interests of employers and create both ethnic segmentation and hierarchies in the labour market. These processes affect the global, national and regional economy. Irregular migration and irregular labour shape them as structural factors especially in the southern Italian regions. Employment areas for illegalized migrants clearly lie in manual and informal labour relations, whose separation from intellectual labour is central to social class relations. The legal form in the informal sector has so far perfidiously occurred in a one-sided legal vacuum and protects employers (often through so-called social cooperatives), but not the workers. In this respect, a process of capitalist division of labour can be observed, whose frame of reference is set by the mafia.

The systematic creation of irregularity through conditions in which it is almost impossible for many people to obtain a regular residence permit and/or regular work can be identified as a labour market strategy. The category of the illegal foreigner creates and maintains a super-exploitable, legally vulnerable and thus easily controlled and 'cheap' labour reserve (De Genova 2002). Since exploitation takes place through criminalized mafia structures, "official" state apparatuses can distance themselves from this. The mafia thus takes on a relevant function in securing the nation state's access to regions in which "the state" enjoys little trust or access. Private owners of the means of production in the regions of the South have formed a capital fraction since the end of 19th century. The agricultural bloc in the South cooperated with the RSA and the industrial bloc in the north of Italy right from the beginning of the mafia phenomenon, which underlines the national dimension of the phenomenon. Historically as well as today, the mafia sabotages the strengthening of workers' organizations using violence and intimidation.

The state apparatus mafia has opposing and at the same time complementary functions within the challenges the capitalist state must counter. On the one hand, it must prevent any political organization of the dominated class that could counteract its economic isolation and/or social fragmentation and open spaces of solidarity and possibility for struggle. In concrete terms, the mafia undermines any political organization of the oppressed class. Instead, the mafia further exacerbates conditions that lead to competition among the subalterns. This is also due to pauperization and precarization of the local population, which can lead to solidarization being largely selective and racialized. "Mafia racism" with its gendered dimension can thus be understood at the same time as a social division and unification mechanism (much like the capitalist state itself according to Poulantzas). Other contradictions are raised for example through the narrative of dissociation from the nation-state. Regionalism functions as a supporting factor of the mafia phenomenon in that it unifies and secures local networks. In this respect too, the mafia has both a divisive (by apparently undermining a national narrative) and a unifying function (as a regional authority that is trusted in).

The informal state-apparatus mafia confirms Poulantzas' claim of the reorganization of the state into what he calls "authoritarian statism" (2000/1978). As he accurately writes, living and working conditions, income levels and job security in general are deteriorating. Due to ever-decreasing product prices, international competition and market distortions,

agriculture can hardly provide sufficient security for the region. In a region strongly characterized by agriculture, what follows is the confirmation of the central role of the mafia on an economic, political and social level: through violence, control, but also through consensus. Using mafia as an object of study, important conclusions can be drawn about the state of representative democracy in capitalist societies. In order to develop the concept of the informal state apparatus further, a more comprehensive study of similar organizations would be necessary, especially regarding its role in the authoritarian-statist restructuring. The professionalization of alternative and informal mechanisms and procedures through which state policy comes about points to its massive democratic deficit. As an informal apparatus, mafia influences administrative procedures and mechanisms at the regional and supra-regional level. It secures capital circuits for individual but collectively organized profits and combines repressive, ideological and economic elements. At the same time, it reacts to the reorganization of the capitalist state by professionalizing its economic role. Its informality is of central importance. Poulantzas diagnoses an increasing alienation of classes (2000/1978). The mafia absorbs contradictions and the "hegemonic instability of the bourgeoisies" (ibid.) by combining interests that would otherwise and openly probably not form an alliance because of their role in the relations of production. The masculinity of the apparatus points to the unifying effect of patriarchal patterns, which also seems to unite across classes. This observation links to critical feminist approaches that conceive of the state as gendered (see e.g. Parashar et al. 2018). Gender, it is assumed, influences the construction and interaction of states (ibid.). The extent to which the masculinity of power networks and state apparatuses must be understood as a further tendency in the course of reorganization can, due to the scope of this paper, only be raised here, but not explored in depth.

By operating as an informal state apparatus, the mafia can ensure the stability of production relations in a lawless space. The research shows that this space is only supposedly stateless and confirms Poulantzas' diagnosis of the devaluation of the legal system in favour of the executive (Poulantzas 2000/1978:172 ff.) or suggests an adaptation: as a "parallel power network" that takes over the mediation of social hegemony instead of parties and other institutions and bypasses formal procedures (Kannankulam 2008: 20). Mafias stabilize the state, which in turn incorporates them in different ways and stabilizes them in turn. The authoritarian state, one could conclude, needs parallel networks of power in order to

maintain itself. The significance of this is de-thematized by setting ‘the mafia’ synonym with the absence of the state. By identifying the mafia as an informal state apparatus in migration management, it can be located alongside, rather than as an adversary of, the ‘official’ state apparatuses in the field of migration management. Finally, the observation helps to analytically explain the preservation of a broken migration system, which turns out to be dysfunctional in the literal sense only at first sight.

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Interviews

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