

Chapter 1



Problems with Cooperatives

Enclaves and Co-ops

A radical state-led initiative, the anti-mafia cooperatives of Sicily are hailed, throughout Italy, as symbols of the anti-mafia movement and are recognised as its most successful manifestation. Yet, while anti-mafia cooperativism¹ unsettled the local labour market in positive ways, its achievements also led to contradictions, which are important to grasp in order to engage with the full meaning of anti-mafia social change in Sicily. A focus on this relationship between continuity and transformation (the bettering of people's livelihoods and the incongruities that accompanied it), as well as on how this relationship was reflected in, and drew on, internal divisions of labour within the cooperatives, drive this book.

The ethnography explores the social processes of change enacted in San Giovanni and its surrounding area, the valley of Spicco Vallata, through a study of the activity of four work-based² agrarian cooperatives. These organisations cultivate land plots that the Italian state confiscated from the powerful local mafia between the years 1996 and 2009, allowing local people direct access to land and work without the mediation of *mafiosi*. Focusing on this shift of access to resources (labour, land and reputation) offered to the cooperatives' members and the unintended repercussions this entailed, this anthropological inquiry examines a politicised project of cooperativism that aimed to secure people's livelihoods away from mafia's influence. Some of these contradictions can be grasped in a phrase of Alberto Dalla Chiesa³ that anti-mafia activists repeatedly told me and had become a mantra of anti-mafia cooperativism: 'The state gives as a right what the mafia offers as a gift'.

Cooperatives, Smaller than Life: The Untold Story

Cooperatives, like most institutions, often profess to do a lot. Their representatives claim social change, or egalitarianism of all kinds, or community economics as their dreamt aim or indeed achieved goal. Like all

ideologies, *cooperativism* then appears larger than life; this is odd, as cooperativism has been seen as the end of -isms, as lived socialist practice (e.g., Whyte 1999; Zamagni and Zamagni 2010; Restakis 2010). Sociologists and anthropologists of cooperation and cooperativisation have often criticised cooperatives for not living up to what they profess (e.g., Kasmir 1996; Narotzky 2007; or MacPherson 2008, Errasti et al 2016). It is an accusation that this book is sympathetic to – and that comes from a slightly Marxian lineage. In this line, the general backdrop against which this book develops is to show how, through the prism of ethnography, cooperatives appear to be smaller than their representatives claim to be.

However, this critique, centred on labour and exploitation, or struggles against neoliberalism, would leave a lot behind⁴. While some (see, e.g., Checker and Hogeland 2004) note that removing co-ops from local context to strive for social change is problematic, if not redundant, not much has been said about that ‘local context’. This is why the anthropological eye of this ethnography is set on how co-ops are more fully engaged in the complexities of local life than often admitted. This engagement is done in silent and unseen ways that can fly in the face of the specific ideology on which cooperatives develop (in this case, the anti-mafia). The social fodder that cooperatives are embedded in comprises life outside the co-op work and within kinship networks, flows of reputation, neighbourhood issues and household organisation. The book thus discusses what has not been touched upon by critiques to cooperativism: the ‘local’ context, in the sense of co-op members’ lives, and hence in a framework that includes relationships beyond waged employment within them, entrenched as members’ lives are in a series of obligations *around* cooperative work. That *around*, I argue, is what determines the inside, the private life of cooperativism.

The book centres on exploring how cooperatives constituted themselves as enclaves of good practice and how this enclaving ideology regarding land and labour (Clemmer 2009) was met with attempts by workers to unwittingly embed the co-ops in local life. Examining the tension between enclaving and embedding mobilises issues central to economic anthropology today, as the Sicilian material offers a lens to questions concerning the social life of cooperatives. Like other junctures of co-ops and state, Sicily’s historically complex relationship with the Italian state is central: the legal confiscation of mafia land was intended to curb local *mafiosi* power and promote values of legality and transparency. In this juncture, state, mafia and cooperativism converge and clash. The co-op concern thus springs organically from a scrutiny of the grey zone of this stage, where my interlocutors lives unfold.

How the cooperative ideology of legality is *embedded* locally becomes then the core of our investigation – and it is through tracing co-op people’s lives in their community outside the time they dedicate to the co-op that this can be studied. Drawing on the idea of embeddedness (Polanyi 2001) of economic activity in social life (and the values associated with people’s grounded experience) can capture the distinct, and even contradictory, social realities sheltered under the same work cooperatives. This is especially so when we see resources as also embedded in socially arranged relationships (like land, as in Hann 1998b; 2007; 2009a). Attention is needed, though: embeddedness does not operate outside context (Peters 2009; de Sardan 2013). In cases of politicised cooperatives, like the Sicilian anti-mafia, it is even explicitly poised against a dis-embedding idea of forming enclave-like structures, sealed out from local life’s vices.

Cooperatives’ resources (labour, land and such) are not ‘embedded’ *uniformly* but across different contexts and different people encompassed in a cooperative. Despite tensions, the ‘informal’ aspects of their livelihoods, embedded in morals about land (Abramson 2000), mediated kinship (Carsten 1995), reputation (Schneider and Schneider 1996) and ‘mutual aid’ develop *alongside* rather than against anti-mafia cooperative (legality-oriented) activity. Rather than reifying ‘cooperatives’ as bounded units of analysis, the focus here is on *their members and daily workers* and their contradictory circumstances, as they bring different values into the organisations they compose. These are translated into diverse practices outside the co-op framework and different ideas on how this framework (should) operate. They are conditioned by the real live circumstances of people participating in them.

After all, the Polanyian embeddedness notion, convergent with the Maussian idea of institutions as total social facts, makes law a non-economic institution that serves to incorporate economic life into society (Catanzariti 2015: 222). The very term ‘embeddedness’ is rarely used by Polanyi himself (Resta 2015: 10). It is often presented as a binary opposition between cases where material life is embedded and others where the market forces disembed it from the economy (Gudeman 2011: 17). The notion has been transformed (Beckert 2011: 40–44) and is here applied to trace how cooperative life, rooted in a sense and an ideology of material change, interacts with the lifeworlds of the people constituting cooperatives.

This is not a series of personal or ‘household’ strategies, simply; this exegesis would reduce the fullness of Sicilian life, with its plethora of grey areas (Rakopoulos 2017c) to rational maximisation, which is precisely what Polanyi would *not* argue (Robotham 2011: 273). Cooperatives’,

like ‘livelihoods’ (and, again, Polanyian meditations are in order here, as per Polanyi 1957 and Graeber 2011) are influenced by values coming from their members’ experiences in their broader social milieu (including kinship, the informal economy and local codes and idioms), often different from, or indeed contradictory to, those claimed by their political principles. Some of these relationships, in the case of Spicco Vallata, are deemed to belong to a problematic ‘tradition’, which the cooperatives strive, in principle, to supersede. For example, kinship relations are seen by cooperativist ideologues as highly suspect because the loyalties they generate are seen to contradict the ideals of legality and meritocracy (see chapter 5), sidelined by promoting activism based on ethical food-production principles (chapter 4). But family is in fact *constitutive* of cooperatives in practice, giving meanings to the experience of workers’ participation in them – in terms of anti-mafia families (Rakopoulos 2017a).

I am not putting forward the idea that my interlocutors are slaloming across two opposed pillars, two different moral worlds, mafia and anti-mafia, and benefitting from both. Rather, their lives are caught in that zone where moral disinterestedness and a morality disassociated from the silences and speeches pertaining in Sicilian life are impossible (Di Bella 2011). It is thus the grounded cooperative life of Sicilians that elucidates our understandings of co-ops as egalitarian institutions and their contradictions (Kapferer 2003). Their actual, non-normative human economy (Hart 2015), beyond -isms, pertains to kinship, moralities over land, gossip and the richness of Sicilian lifeworlds, where mafia is a constant condition of local sociality. This is a lifeworld where law is often bypassed but also adhered to in a generic way (Blok 2010). My interlocutors navigate different situations that produce a grey zone, where knots of relations pertaining to mafia, anti-mafia and state both conflict and merge. The mafia is thus presented as a looming presence, a constant in people’s lives. People see it as a constellation of people with agrarian livelihoods – but not as a structural domain, as it is most often discussed (see, e.g., Gambetta 2009; Varese 2011; Travaglio 2014). ‘Its’ sociological construction, while analytically needed, urgently needs ethnographic backing, where real people do real things – and this book partly serves this aim.

Having said that, this work aspires to be the first ethnography of the anti-mafia movement that pays attention to livelihoods and production processes rather than civil society mobilisation (see Schneider and Schneider 2002b; 2008). This way, it contributes to the ongoing query into Italian neoliberalisms, in terms of work regimes, civic politics, and their moralities (Yanagisako 2002, as well as 2013). The politics of morality have been under constant scrutiny in current anthropology (from

Osella and Osella 2011 to Zigon and Throop 2014), and an attention to the situatedness of ethical concerns is at play (see Fassin 2004). There are even attempts at resuscitating discussion on the ‘moral economy’ outside the discipline, with an attention on how moral concerns are present in contemporary capitalism (Götz 2015). The strongly moralised world of anti-mafia activism meets, in Spicco Vallata, the moral lifeworlds of those working in the co-ops, with often mixed results.

A burgeoning anthropological discussion among Italianists has brought about the intrinsic, everyday neoliberalism in divisive and unequally structured work relations (Molé 2012) and in the moralities of doing good and professing solidarity (Muehlebach 2012). The general trends of neoliberal cosmopolitanism (Harvey 2003; 2011) do acquire contradictory meanings on the ground. In the Sicilian case, mafia and anti-mafia can be two – granted, opposing – sides of an entrepreneurial coin, struggling over acquisitions of privileged access to markets and land management. In that process, access is negotiated through civic activism in times of austerity, a phenomenon also rampant in Italy, although livelihoods remain relatively in the shade of its scholarly discussion (Muehlebach 2013; Palumbo 2016). When this activism is indeed associated with Italian livelihoods becoming marginalised, it is often an urban phenomenon (Herzfeld 2009).

How this discussion can be sited in the specifics of nested structures of human cooperation, like work cooperatives, still requires critical inquiry, especially as such debate is often at some distance from livelihood concerns. The materiality of how people engage with and in civil society has been set aside, as debate has very creatively focused on the intricate ideological makings of activist morality (Schneider and Schneider 2001). These moralities are contradictory, and these contradictions remain ‘immaterial, but objective’ (to think in a Marxian sense), rooted in labour, in the widest sense of the term.

But cooperatives’ internal differentiation, their divisions of labour, are not simply the result of exposure to markets (Kasmir 2009). In fact, the workforce in these Sicilian cooperatives is composed of people embedded in different, often irreconcilable, social relations and circumstances. In the political context of a project whose lynchpin is legality with its consciously ‘enclaving’ force, legal categories do not have meanings or values shared universally. Politically driven cooperatives *are* founded on normative principles, in this case the state ideology of legality as well as a moral understanding of food production and agrarian economy (see Luetchford and Pratt 2013). Diverging from perceptions of the term in the relevant sociology (Jamieson 2000; Sciarrone 2009; Armao 2009; see also

Pardo 2004), I nuance this idea of legality, suggesting that it is not neutral but socially ordered (and ordering), rooted in ideological perceptions of community (akin to reflections offered by Santino 2002). The ethnography therefore provides an account of a radical political project that challenges the mafia but largely fails to grasp the local social arrangements within which it unfolds.

Of Guns and Grapes: Imagining a Post-mafia Sicily

Confiscations

Palermo in the 1980s had the highest rates of violent crime among European cities (Sterling 1991; Dickie 2004; 2014). The *mafiosi*, coordinated in the vertical structure of Cosa Nostra (Lodato 2001; cf. Tilly 1974), selectively eliminated state bureaucrats, including investigating magistrates, who challenged their aims. The number of mafia victims, dubbed ‘excellent cadavers’ (Stille 1996; see also Sant Cassia 2007), included members of parliament such as Pio La Torre, who had sponsored an anti-mafia law in 1982 (Rizzo 2003) that initiated the formation of anti-mafia confiscations. His assassination that same year indicates just how important the law he had crafted actually was.⁵

The ‘Rognoni-La Torre’ Law (number 646/82, co-proposed with the Christian Democrat parliamentarian Virginio Rognoni) made two fundamental amendments to article 416 of the Italian Criminal Code. It introduced the specific crime of ‘mafia’ association, distinct from ‘organised crime’. It also introduced the power of the courts to confiscate the assets of persons belonging to the mafia, as well as those of their relatives, partners, and families who in the five years before a confiscation had acted as ‘straw persons’.⁶ In criminal proceedings against a person ‘for mafia’ – i.e., for any type of criminal offence related to article 416 *bis* of the Criminal Code – his assets are sequestered when he (unexceptionally, a man) is formally charged, despite the presumption of innocence. They are then confiscated if the defendant is convicted *for mafia*, if he cannot show they have an innocent origin. Since then, when the *mafioso* is charged (indicted), his assets are sequestered, while upon conviction the property would then be confiscated.

La Torre’s collaboration with Rognoni also shows the convergence of the two major parties, *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC) and *Partito Comunista Italiano* (PCI),⁷ en route to an anti-mafia political consensus (Lane 2010: 34–36). La Torre belonged to the moderate faction of the PCI. The commu-

nists promoted 'an alliance of democratic forces' against mafia violence, raising awareness of mafia intimidation of the peasant movement (Rizzo 2003). Interestingly, as a trade unionist, La Torre had been imprisoned for his part in Spicco Vallata land occupations in 1948, an action aimed in part against mafia power. This shows how state policies on mafia shifted over time (Ginsborg 2003b: 205): by the mid-1990s, in response to intense mafia anti-state violence and civil society pressures, the state took a more active anti-mafia stance, and the confiscation law was a key intervention in this policy.

Anthropologists exploring the specific characteristics of Italian communism have noted that its 'escape from Leninism' (Shore 1990) consolidated the party's hegemonic success in most of the country, but not Sicily (Li Causi 1993). The PCI elaborated and posed the 'moral issue' (*la questione morale*) to politics, which was incorporated in contemporary Italian political discourse (Ginsborg 2005a). Focusing on the transparency of the public sphere, the moral issue entailed exposing the role of ambiguous political agents (like the mafia). The principle of '*legalità*' invoked by left-wing legalistic agendas and endorsed by the anti-mafia cooperatives is currently used in ways that emulate and reproduce the 'moral question' of the late 1970s (Rakopoulos 2014a: 25). It can be defined as a moral observation and an ethical appreciation of the law and the jural system morality.

New legal measures were introduced in the early 1990s when a series of mafia killings had provoked popular contempt for the organisation (Jamieson 2000: 127; Lavio 2014). These included the brazen assassinations of the magistrates Falcone and Borsellino, as well as an escalation of violence against state officials, which even included terrorist threats. The law providing for the 'social use of assets confiscated by the mafia' eventually came into effect in 1996 (n. 109/96), passed in response to the activism of the NGO *Libertà*.⁸ One million signatures were gathered supporting the demand for 'the mafia to restitute what was unjustly usurped' (Libera 2008b).⁹ Therefore dubbed 'a popular initiative legislation' (Pati 2010), the law introduced a procedure to ensure the 'social use' of the confiscated assets (Libera 2010). Once a *mafioso* is convicted, his assets, including property rights, are handed over to the Ministry for Internal Affairs.¹⁰ Having identified the territorial jurisdiction where the assets are located, the Ministry passes them to the relevant municipality. In the case of land, this includes ownership, usufruct and adjunct rights. When arrested, a person accused of mafia-related crimes is asked to prove the provenance of their assets; this undermines the presumption of innocence in Italian (and generally European) Criminal Law. This jural

process, as an ‘extraordinary measure’, draws from legal theory of exceptional circumstances. Under normal criminal procedure, this fundamental democratic principle is undisputable. But here, ‘the realm of mafia is an “*exceptio legalis*”’, as the Palermitan magistrate Dr Rossio told me.¹¹

An example will help clarify this process. Giovanni Torinese (a San Giovanni *mafioso*) owned a vineyard in the territory of Reale (a Spicco Vallata village), bought to launder drug money in the mid-1980s. The *mafioso* was arrested in 1997; the land plot was confiscated in 1999 and passed into the property of the state; the Reale municipality then transferred its usufruct to an anti-mafia cooperative, under renewable lease contracts valid for twenty or thirty years. Therefore, the confiscated plots always belong to the state and are leased for free (*comodato d’uso*) to the co-ops, which never really retain full ownership over the confiscated land. These social agrarian cooperatives fall into the category of appropriate social use as they abide by the principles of Italian cooperativism and are not-for-profit organisations, protected in the constitution (article 45). They are supported by the state and Libertà, which says that the land was allocated to the cooperatives ‘as they represented the community’ (Libera 2008a) and founded ‘an economy of legality and solidarity’ (Libera 2009b). Libertà pushed for a legality-oriented discourse promoting the anti-mafia cooperatives.

Despite the cooperative movement’s 150-year-old history (Sapelli 1981), the Italian ‘social cooperatives’ are relatively new. The anti-mafia cooperatives specifically were created in response to the 109/96 law, and use confiscated land plots, machinery and other resources taken from mafia (tractors, harvesters and a winery called Cento¹²) and bestowed on the cooperatives between 1996 and 2006 to be ‘restituted back into productivity’ (Frigerio and Pati 2007: 3; Pati 2005). In 2012 there were eight such cooperatives in Italy (see figure 4.3, page 100), cultivating land hailed as ‘liberated’ or ‘emancipated’ and presented as the result of grassroots mobilisations with state backing (Procino 2003). The fact that four of those eight cooperatives were located in the Spicco Vallata area of western Sicily made that the ideal site to study ‘anti-mafia change’. Libertà and many journalists alike claimed the area had been ‘liberated from the mafia’ and was an example for communities across southern Italy (Morelli 2003; Libera 2006: 2).

After the mid-1990s, when the relationship between the state and Cosa Nostra shifted from connivance to conflict, triggered by an escalation of mafia violence, the jailing of numerous Spicco Vallata *mafiosi* between 1996 and 2000 (twelve clan¹³ leaders in San Giovanni alone) multiplied the number of landed properties in the hands of local municipalities. While

elsewhere in southern Italy the confiscated assets passed to other social structures (not necessary cooperatives), the co-op solution was deemed more appropriate for western Sicily – and proved more efficient. Mayors pushed for the formation of a specialist bureaucratic apparatus to administer the transfers of usufruct rights to local cooperatives, guarantee the ‘social use’ and ‘associated’ use of the land and promote the cooperatives’ activity at large.

The mayors of five Spicco Vallata villages welcomed the creation of the Consortium Progress and Law in May 2000, which to this day oversees the cooperatives’ activity, ‘to administer the assets in associated use and for a social goal’ (Focus 2001: 1). Tasked with the transfer of confiscated land and other assets ‘from the clans to the state and the community’ (Focus 2001: 12; Candito 2012), the Consortium imposed a model of anti-mafia cooperativism characterised by the pursuit of legality and values endorsed in legislation (‘work’, ‘property’), especially regarding the regulation of land and labour (Moroni 2010).

The Consortium, whose seat is in the San Giovanni municipality, has two branches: in one, led by the local mayors, personnel may change through the municipal elections that take place every four years. The other branch is a permanent team of four bureaucrats appointed by the Ministry of the Interior. The managing directorship of the Consortium is a permanent position chaired by Matteo Mandola, a young and incredibly stylish – well-tailored suit, aviator glasses, long shiny hair – Palermitan lawyer with a PhD from the local law department. When I first asked him his views on the confiscations, he told me they were due to ‘a state of permanent legal emergency with mafia issues in our country’. The Consortium’s presidency rotates every year among the eight mayors. The municipalities that originally participated in 2000 were Tarini, Reale, Cembali, San Turiddu and San Giovanni. Three more villages joined three years later: Bocca, Fonte and Principe. The Consortium was promoted by the centre-left prefect of the Palermo province of the time, as well as by the leftist mayors of San Giovanni and Tarini. The guiding principles of the cooperatives were the interconnected notions of law and progress, as the Consortium’s name suggested; as Luca, the president of Falcone, told me, ‘There is no development without legality and no legality without development; this is our mission here, to enact both’.

The NGO Libertà has played a key role: despite not having any administrative powers itself (not being a state organisation), the Consortium has delegated to the NGO full responsibility for the representation and marketing of the cooperatives, in what Matteo Mandola described to me as ‘a joint venture of state and civil society against the mafia’. The NGO Arci¹⁴

also assisted in this, catering for Lavoro e Altro, the most openly left-wing cooperative among the four that I examined.

It is important to emphasise the local character of the restitution process. The cooperatives studied here cultivate land that had been confiscated from significant Spicco Vallata *mafiosi*. Such mafia figures include Totò Riina and Giovanni Barbeto, today imprisoned for life, who controlled Cosa Nostra's heroin trafficking in the 1980s and 1990s, when the Sicilian mafia organised the largest share of the world's circulation of the drug (Camilleri and Lodato 2002). The Lavoro e Altro was located in Tarini, while the three others (Falcone, Borsellino and the much smaller Liberaanima¹⁵) were in San Giovanni. Collectively, the land tracts these cooperatives managed amounted to almost six hundred hectares; they include mainly organic vineyards and cereal farms (Libera 2009a; Consorzio 2010). The cooperatives also had the usufruct of two beautiful nineteenth-century Spicco Vallata *masserie* (farm houses), both confiscated from Giovanni Barbeto and turned into agricultural tourism establishments (*agriturismi*). The fact that the majority of confiscations in Italy took place in the cradle of Cosa Nostra was highly symbolic.

The rhetoric of this redistribution of assets used by official agencies, such as the Consortium, presents a just state actively intervening to restore to an (idealised) community what had been 'stolen' from it. State documents explaining 'whither to confiscate' (Focus 2001) resemble a Marxist analysis of primitive accumulation.¹⁶ These documents present *mafiosi* as having 'usurped' the agricultural land from what was allegedly in the common domain, available to all (Consorzio 2010). In fact (see chapter 3), there had been only one short-lived historical case of collectively owned land in Spicco Vallata, related to the 1946 peasant land occupations. The confiscated land, as the state apparatuses and the NGO claim (in texts co-authored by their representatives), symbolises 'a resource for the area, an opportunity for development and civil growth' (Frigerio and Pati 2007: 5). Following this line of argument, the authors envision newly created cooperatives as horizontal work organisations (all members being equal in pay and work tasks). Their aim, associated with ideas on 'community' (as explored in chapter 8), is to 'democratically accommodate the land that returned to the *community*, after the mafia had unlawfully usurped it' (Frigerio and Pati 2007: 37, emphasis added) and to guarantee the '*community's* participation in the social use of the confiscated assets' (Frigerio and Pati 2007: 67; Libera 2008b, emphasis added). The state confiscations project is still ongoing at the time of this book's publication, almost twenty years after its inception.

The first land plot to be restituted – i.e., allocated to a social cooperative – was a vineyard in Tarini, of Totò ‘The Beast’ Riina, confiscated in 1999 and bestowed on the Lavoro e Altro cooperative. (As mentioned, the municipalities retain legal ownership of the confiscated assets, and the cooperatives only hold the usufruct). As the Consortium was driven by an ideology of communalism and ‘justice’, a key element for its practice was replacing the mafia as patron by ‘reconstituting the presence of the state in the area’ (Libera 2006).

The public competitions resulted in the hiring of the core workforce and the establishment of the cooperatives I have studied most closely: the Giovanni Falcone (2001) and the Paolo Borsellino (2006).¹⁷ The fifteen original members of each were selected by the Consortium and Libera. The positions were publicly advertised, and the meritocracy-oriented selection process involved detailed scrutiny of the applicants’ abilities, anti-mafia commitment, kinship connections and social contacts. Their ability to demonstrate proved ‘absence of’ kinship connections and social contacts ‘with the mafia’ was a prerequisite to people’s recruitment. The cooperatives were not allowed to employ anyone who had any *mafioso* in their ‘social circle’, including kin (up to the third degree, inclusive), friends and affines (Bando 2001). Most of my informants were therefore either people selected in that process or others who joined later, replacing members who had left; they were recruited through connections they had among the existing cooperative workforce. In addition, there were workers on short-term contracts of seasonal employment, paid by the day (‘daily workers’). By 2009, the number of people making a living directly through these two cooperatives was more than double the original thirty. By 2016, there were more than 50 members and 60 employees in 9 such cooperatives around the country.

Inherent in the original public competitions was a differentiated valuation according to skill and capability that would have a serious effect eventually on deep divisions between members’ teams (see chapter 4). The two-tiered organisation of the co-ops is a leitmotif to which we shall return several times through the book’s narrative, wherein differences between social class, urban and rural, household composition and gender would prove to be crucial in the social life of cooperatives and the very constitution of the anti-mafia at large.

‘800 Barbetos’

San Giovanni was the ideal site for fieldwork: the most successful project of confiscation and redistribution of mafia land in Italy had taken place

there. It was also, as mentioned, the birthplace of Giovanni Barbeto, and still has a reputation for being one of the most mafia-influenced villages in Italy.¹⁸ In a widely discussed and overquoted newspaper article, published right after Barbeto's arrest, a leading anti-mafia journalist called San Giovanni 'the village of the 800 Barbetos' (Fava 1996), meaning that Giovanni 'The Pig' Barbeto, a *mafioso* who, by his own account, had killed 'around 150 to 200 people' (Lodato 2006: 3), was the tip of the iceberg in a sea of social consensus and kinship links: the 'tradition' of San Giovanni was mafia connivance. 'It is not easy to construct normality in a village bloodied up by hatred,' claimed another article (Corrado 1997). Later, the same newspaper, *Corriere della Sera*, conducted a survey, in which allegedly 60 per cent of *sangiovesi*¹⁹ said the mafia was 'a great thing' (Mignosi 1999).

That San Giovanni – a place with such heavily charged history – was targeted for 'anti-mafia change' had obviously considerable symbolic weight. The subsequent portrayal of how the 'village of the 800 Barbetos', virtually the epitome of mafia consensus, converted to become a village of 'anti-mafia heaven', as Libertà members claimed, was salient – especially given the cooperatives' recruitment policy for locals of excluding anyone who had even remote kinship, affinity or friendship links to mafia.

The mafia is not just an 'agent' or a 'structure' in the island; neither is it linked only to local traditions and popular imagination (Breschi 1986). In fact, this tradition is put to test by the anti-mafia: Spicco Vallata, and specifically San Giovanni, are cases where tradition is considered decidedly problematic. Often, in situations anthropologists study, 'tradition' is either treasured and change is seen as desirable in some ways but disruptive (of culture and social structure) or the anthropologist insists that traditions being abandoned have some value. In the case of a place where 'tradition' is so deeply associated with violence and criminality, this situation becomes almost impossible and actually creates an unusual, if uncomfortable ethnographic setting (see Gilsenan 1996; Herzfeld 1985; Taussig 2005, although in Sicily, violence was not salient anymore). Yet since the mafia is 'cultural' or 'social structural' in certain received ethnographic senses (see, e.g., Gambetta 2009; Pine 2012; Santino 2012), taking down 'its' *economic* power provoked a series of interesting implications that not only dispute a political economy framework but also challenge established ethnographic sensibilities regarding tradition.

This is also true for lay perceptions of the mafia phenomenon, in my experience. When I returned from the field, and throughout my development in the discipline, people I described my work to asked me whether the mafia was still strong in Sicily. People's interest revolved around

a thematic core, the island being the *locus classicus* of mafia, the ‘heart’ of the mafia ‘problem’ (Lane 2010). Not surprisingly, the film industry informed most people’s views: many inquired whether I was a mafia movie enthusiast or how close movies’ depictions of ‘the mafia’ were to reality.

Getting back from the field to London was telling: when I explained to acquaintances (including Italians) that my research was on ‘the anti-mafia’, not the mafia, most reacted with mixed feelings of disappointment and enthusiasm. For many, this sounded more intriguing than the mafia itself, connoting heroism and commitment for the people involved. Interestingly, gendered frameworks often informed these discussions. Many assumed that anti-mafia activists were ‘brave men’ and asked me about how successful ‘the anti-mafia’ had been. However, rather than uncritically accept the claim that ‘anti-mafia’ equals ‘change’, I examine how activities of people involved in the cooperatives transform meanings of land, labour and discourse, while at the same time reproducing established practices and allowing for continuations with past relationships (Sorge 2015).

My research took place throughout the whole of 2009. A pre-doctoral research stay in Sicily lasted six months, from January to July 2007. Confiscations appeared as the only type of instance where an initiative against the mafia had produced changes in Sicilians’ livelihoods and anti-mafia activism yielded income. Having interviewed journalists, judges, police officers and NGO activists, I came to the provisional conclusion that mobilisation around anti-mafia initiatives was manifested as a ‘sense of civic duty’. Different research interlocutors²⁰ answered both ‘Why take action against the mafia?’ and ‘What changes has opposing the mafia instigated to your life?’ by stating, ‘Being a good citizen’.²¹ Most thought an ‘anti-mafia San Giovanni’ was a laughable image, due precisely to the village’s reputation as a ‘traditionally mafia’ place; it was for this reason that San Giovanni cooperatives appeared as the ideal site for participant observation around people actively contesting the mafia while making a living.

San Giovanni was hailed by Libertà agents I spoke with as a village whose land was ‘liberated from the mafia’, an idea also promoted by the Consortium (Focus 2012). During harvest, volunteers from northern Italy visited San Giovanni through Libertà-organised summer camps to help the cooperatives with agricultural work; the public image the place had acquired made it all the more appealing. After I visited the village a few times and contacted people from the cooperatives, I decided to move to San Giovanni. Although many cooperative members (the administra-



Illustration 1.1: The view from the balcony of my apartment: *via Porta Palermo*.

tors) hailed from Palermo and lived in the city, commuting thirty-one kilometres to San Giovanni to work, it was in San Giovanni where mass confiscations of mafia leaders' landed property had taken place and where the seat of the Consortium was located.

I asked Checco, the Falcone cooperative's 'PR', to help me move to the village. He explained that several journalists from Italy and abroad had visited to write about the anti-mafia experience there.²² A journalist himself, he admitted he could not understand why I had to spend a year there to get a grasp of the situation. Nevertheless, he introduced me to *signor* Pippo Pitrè, then a fifty-eight-year-old day worker from the Falcone and ex-member of the Borsellino cooperative, and asked him to help me out. I took up permanent residence in Pippo's empty apartment in the village, paying him rent, and he became a key informant. He and his family had moved to another house, two kilometres outside the village, in 2007.

The official population of San Giovanni is 8,349 people (ISTAT 2011), although most locals insisted that the number of permanent residents was four thousand at best. The village was founded as San Giovanni dei Mortilli at the foot of the Mato Hill in 1779, built according to the needs of the historical specifics of the land tenure system at the time (*latifundism*²⁴), hosting the largest number of people in the smallest possible space. Anthropologists have described the inland Sicilian 'agrotown' as a technology of densely populated settlement that reflected the needs of

the latifundist system (Schneider and Schneider 1976: 34; Blok 1974: 47). Blok argues these ‘peasant agglomerations’ are characteristic of southern Italy generally (1969; also in 2000: 136–54).

Interestingly, San Giovanni’s history was born out of a confiscation: the valley’s *feudi* belonged to the Jesuit College of Trapani (Belli 1934) (their names still demarcate land territories today: Dammusi, Mortilli, Signora). In 1776, the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies ordered the expulsion of the Jesuits, and the Marquis of Sambuca, a member of the Sicilian nobility, acquired their land (Comune di San Giuseppe Jato 2008). He was issued a license to build a settlement for the agrarian workforce of his latifundio. The nobleman’s settlement attracted *braccianti* (agrarian workers) from neighbouring villages; the site’s position on a route between southern Sicily and Palermo led to its rapid development (Comune 2009). In 1820, the village population was more than five thousand. A part of the hill collapsed in 1838, prompting a reshuffling in settlement and the construction of the adjunct village of San Turiddu (today’s official population: 5,016, [ISTAT 2011]), built to house San Giovanni’s homeless population.

Locals called San Giovanni ‘*un paese*’, a village – although the term could also be translated as small town. There were hardly any public spaces; the *villetta*, however – a widening of the vibrant Palermo road (*via Palermo*) – formed an unofficial square; its five *bar* (cafés) were packed with teenagers on weekend evenings. The building where I lived was well situated in the thick of things, close to the *villetta*. Opposite the apartment was the Billiards café, which, I soon noticed, was popular with *mafiosi*. The balcony looked out onto a panorama of the Mato Valley: vineyards as far as the eye could see. The size of the apartment was inconvenient (two hundred square metres, when I only used a couple of rooms), but, as it was very close to the village centre and the cooperatives’ offices, I found it ideal from the start.

The Falcone and Borsellino anti-mafia cooperatives shared the same offices; after Marafusa (the giant winemaker of the area), they were the most widely advertised enterprises of the village. Yet, their offices were difficult to find. On *via Palermo* westwards towards the *bar* Virilia, located at the edge of the village, the cooperatives’ offices are ungracefully located behind a petrol station. This was where the cooperative administrators worked, mostly young Palermitans. They were unimpressed by San Giovanni. Overlooking the Mato Valley, the village’s panoramas were charming, but cooperative members almost unanimously felt the village itself was dreadful. Every morning they had to travel the thirty-one kilometres from Palermo along a highway they described as a dire construction financed by a 1980s money-laundering scheme for the profits



Illustration 1.2: Detail of the *villetta*: a monument.

of international heroin trafficking in which San Giovanni *mafiosi* were central players.

There were many signs of local mafia presence, which Palermitan administrators complained about. For lack of plaster, the building where I stayed, as well as most of the surrounding apartment blocks, showed bare red brick. Neighbours were proud to emphasise that ‘in a peasant community like ours, there is not much need for comfort’. Some argued that the unattractive brickwork facing the main streets of the village indicated ‘what it meant to be a peasant’ and, indeed, to come ‘from a village with a mafia past’. I associated the shabbiness with the mafia’s logic of contempt for conspicuous consumption (Arlacchi 1986: 23). When



Illustration 1.3: The mayor of a local village alongside two members of Lavoro e Altro, in a confiscated winery.



Illustration 1.4: The entrance to the shared offices of the Falcone and Borsellino cooperatives. Notice the humble buildings; the red door is a warehouse; the cooperatives' offices were on the first floor; notice the red banner welcoming the 'E'istate liberi' of volunteer labourers in the confiscated fields. The banner made the offices quite conspicuous, unlike most of the year.



Illustration 1.5: The highway, with San Giovanni on the right; above the village, notice the Mato Hill.



Illustration 1.6: Member-workers (the four men in the foreground) and volunteers (the younger people in the background) of the Borsellino during lunch break in the vineyards of Castello, during harvest, in August. At the front: Niki, Peppe, Ciccio and Donato. Photo by Francisco Calafate.



Illustration 1.7: Members of the Lavoro e Altro co-op during a lunch break, while they set up the co-op's agriturismo. The two workers at the front are wearing caps of the CGIL union. Photo by Diego Orlando.

I started visiting local homes, invited by friends, housewives were happy to show off shiny new pieces of cutlery or furniture but shrugged when questioned about the lack of plaster on their house's out-facing walls, often responding, 'It is better to enjoy some luxury without people knowing your riches', or, 'Better to show you are a pauper while you actually reign'. A neighbour told me a local adage popularised by *mafiosi* to explain the apparently anti-consumerist local ethos: *megghiu cummannari chi futturì* (it's better to command than to fuck).²⁵

Among the Anti-mafia

Research among people struggling against the mafia posed a number of ethical issues before, during and after fieldwork. I originally handed a personal declaration to the three cooperatives' presidents, stating that all information gathered was to be totally confidential, masked behind careful layers of anonymity in my book and in any articles that would stem from my research. To the best of my abilities, I gave the same assurance, orally,

the first time I came in contact with someone I interviewed. My emphasis on how I had to change all names of people, places and organisations, however, provoked curiosity rather than ease among many interlocutors.

In fact, it was in relation to confidentiality that I first glimpsed how the two-tiered organisation of the cooperatives reflected differentiated ethics and moralities. Seeking to organise my methodology to accommodate the intricacies of the cooperatives' division of labour in terms of ethics required some telling manoeuvres. Methods and argumentation converge in anthropological endeavour, where theory stems directly from the paradigms of the people one works with. The administration members could not grasp why I wanted to be so 'secretive' when their remit was all about publicity and transparency. Some explained to me that not anonymising posed no dangers to them, as they had already been exposed quite extensively to the local society, and even on a national scale. In fact, some saw my research as another channel of publicity. For them, publicly 'naming' *mafiosi* as well as publicising names of anti-mafia activists was part of their anti-mafia activism.

The co-ops' manual workforce, on the other hand, living in Spicco Vallata, took a different stance. They were careful to remind me that what they shared with me could be publicised 'anywhere I wanted but Sicily'. Tano, for instance, told me that 'as long as it remains in the limits of my village and my island, I want you to be cautious'. I followed this advice and managed to act according to the needs of different informants. These contradictions posed severe ethical issues for my research but I followed the confidentiality protocols suggested for anthropological fieldwork, not revealing interlocutors' identities and protecting them from each other (Caplan 2003; Edel and Edel 2000). This was particularly significant, given that I met a few *mafiosi* while doing fieldwork whose names I also altered for the book.

People's ideas on safety thus echoed the cooperatives' internal division between the administration/office-based/Palermitan team and the agricultural/fields-based/local team. As I was not a local, most villagers who were not connected to the cooperatives thought I was a new member of a cooperative's administration team. My first impression was that this could entail risks. Initially, feeling in danger was a prominent emotional state for me: I spent the first months of fieldwork worrying about mafia intimidation, always carrying with me a USB with all my notes, naively fearing that someone would break into my house.

As with confidentiality, and in relation to it, I initially projected ideas of safety onto my relationships with locals. After I had spent a few months getting into the fieldwork process, the more I acknowledged how 'mafia'

and anti-mafia were interwoven in San Giovanni, the more I realised that my disquiet was groundless: there was no reason to believe that local *mafiosi* wished to harm me, and it was safe to assume they had no real strategic interest to harm my interlocutors. Apart from alleged arsons in an olive tree grove and a wheat field, there had been hardly any violent or threatening activities against cooperative members.

The effects of certain reflexivities, triggered by my interaction with locals, touched on issues of research positionality. The much-discussed issue of the anthropological researcher's 'privileged' position vis-à-vis their research participants only partly applied to my case. My physical features, knowledge of Italian popular culture and literature,²⁶ non-suggestive accent and relative experience in agrarian work even led many locals, when meeting me for the first time, to treat me as a Sicilian visitor to the area. My acquired capacity in the Sicilian dialect, dubbed a language in itself by most locals, was also an asset – although when a conversation moved from Italian to Sicilian, new interlocutors would immediately realise I was not from the island, which then often became the object of jokes and sarcasm.²⁷ My degree of familiarity shaped most of my initial interactions with interlocutors, including cases where some informants joked that I must have Sicilian origins and even felt that my being Greek confirmed this. While appreciating my facility in relevant matters, interlocutors eagerly insisted on the uniqueness of Sicily as a cultural hybrid formed of centuries-old distillations of cultures. However, for most, 'the Hellenic aspect' shone above other facets: Sicilians were 'Greeks who had become Italians' one woman told me.

These (perhaps essentialist) accounts worked in most cases to my benefit, as I gained people's trust, which allowed me access to their lived spaces. Many locals were intrigued by the presence of 'the Greek' among them, and some identified similarities between Sicily and Greece: the two regions were, allegedly, 'insular', relatively impoverished and 'corrupt' peripheries of a nonetheless historically rich European 'South'. Although the premises of this relationship were slippery and sometimes uncomfortable, partially accepting these labels won the trust of many people, as they saw in me someone from a background no more privileged than theirs, especially when I explained that I was raised in a rural area where viticulture²⁸ was the way most people made their living. During participant observation in the vineyards, this personal background was particularly appreciated by co-workers.

The gendered aspect of this assimilation, however, had counter-productive effects; despite (or possibly because) I looked like many locals, my status as an unmarried young man in the village did not help in

gaining access to households where young women lived. This problem was somewhat alleviated with time, especially when a female friend visited me in the field. This gave me the reputation of being engaged, which I often did not refute when asked. Nevertheless, I did not manage to enter the homes of all my interlocutors. This biased my research, as the data gathered from spending time with female research participants, usually housewives, could have been richer and wider otherwise.²⁹

These issues also conditioned my ways of reciprocating towards my research participants, to bring back to them a sense of the research achievements and returning some of their trust. Cigarettes and distilled liquor from Greece became popular among agrarian workers of the cooperatives. When I had to meet people outside the work context but, for reasons mentioned above, not in their homes, I made sure I treated them to drinks or a meal, although this proved, in a couple of cases, to violate their own principles of hospitality, which I eventually opted to prioritise. Another contribution I managed to offer was English lessons to some co-op members, particularly the president of the Falcone cooperative, Luca. He enthusiastically asked me to help him, as he thought English skills were valuable for the cooperative's development now that they had started, in a modest way, to export to niche markets in Germany. These intensive language classes helped create a bond early on. Some cooperative members commented that, while as a researcher, I aimed to being 'taught' by Luca, I ended up teaching him: this reciprocity reinforced the inter-subjectivity of the ethnographic experience.

It is important to note that most interlocutors saw my presence in the village as a 'success of the anti-mafia'. Fifteen years before the time of fieldwork, I was told, this research would have been impossible, as I probably would have been assassinated. I am aware that this was proof, for many people, of the change the cooperatives had brought about. In this respect at least, intentions and outcomes of action were identical – like an unwitting personal becoming. Peppe, a young research interlocutor, insightfully remarked that '*you* are the answer to your research question,' meaning that my very safe presence in the field was already proof that Sicily had changed immensely. This book describes, analyses and problematises this change.

NOTES

1. The terms 'cooperationism' and 'cooperatism' are also used; see for instance Fournier's biography of Mauss as a 'co-operator' (2006: 107–10). I use the term 'cooperativism' to denote a set of principles that cooperative members follow.

2. As discussed later, cooperativism is either producer-based, where autonomous peasants cooperate, or worker-based, where people co-own land or cultivate land owned by the state, as in the anti-mafia cooperatives. A 'cooperative' is thus an association around which production and work is organised as the co-op law implies: all working participants are equal members, with a vote in the annual General Assembly; profits are reinvested within the activities of the association, income generated for members is relatively horizontal, and divisions of labour are aimed to be set at a minimum. Co-ops in Italy, like in many other countries, are integrated in cooperative banking schemes, where they derive favorable credit. An agricultural cooperative is defined under the Italian land reform laws as having at least nine members.
3. General Alberto Dalla Chiesa was a *prefetto* in Palermo, in effect the general officer of the *Carabinieri* (the military police, one of the three police forces of Italy, and active in hunting *mafiosi*) in Sicily. The *prefetto* coordinates the administrative actions of the state in the territory; he has special powers on police, *Carabinieri* and other state forces, and he coordinates them in particular problematic situations, during natural disasters, and in matters concerning the public order and 'civil protection'. Dalla Chiesa, who was general of the *Carabinieri* and had been successful in the struggle against terrorism, was sent for this reason to Sicily as *prefetto*, to coordinate the struggle against mafia. Shortly before his assassination he had been appointed as a 'super-prefect' to lead all of the police and military anti-mafia efforts in Sicily. Dalla Chiesa was killed in Palermo in 1982, only one hundred days after he had taken office; his legacy is still debated in Italy, partly because he had played a key role in curbing the Red Brigades in the north, when he served as *Carabiniere* general in Torino, yet failed to crush Cosa Nostra (N. Dalla Chiesa 2007; Stille 1995: 61). Dalla Chiesa is revered by people in the anti-mafia cooperatives, who often quote him.
4. For a start, current scholarship of work often omits a discussion of cooperatives altogether. In the SAGE handbook of work and employment (2015) there is no chapter dedicated to co-ops, in 530 pages.
5. It has been said that 'the mafia kills in the way a state does; it does not murder; it executes' (Dickie 2004: 97).
6. Legally, a 'straw person' (*prestanome*) is a person who does not intend to have a genuine beneficial interest in a property but to whom such property is nevertheless conveyed, in order to facilitate a more complicated transaction at law (in this case, retaining the plots' ownership). In Spicco Vallata, such people were often victims of mafia intimidation but equally often were mafia affiliates. The issue of nominal landownership is complex, as it regards the visibility of *mafiosi* vis-à-vis the state. In terms of criminal procedure, once an asset is proved to be directly or indirectly controlled by a *mafioso*, it becomes confiscated, despite its nominal status. This is not to be confused, however, with the practice of registering wives as nominal landowners (explored in chapter 7) or *mafiosi* wives actually owning plots acquired from inheritance; in cases such as these, the plots are legally glossed as *familiari* and are not confiscated (chapter 9).
7. The PCI (Communist Party) became, at the time of La Torre, the largest Western communist party (Shore 1990). The DC (Christian Democracy) was

the historical centre-right party of Italy, which single-handedly governed the country from the mid-1940s to the mid-1980s (regarding party politics of the period, see Ginsborg 2003a: 141–85).

8. Libertà is an 'umbrella NGO', the largest in Italy, to which 1,500 organisations adhere. There is a Libertà branch in fifty Italian cities. It caters for 'the anti-mafia struggle', promoting 'the restitution of land' (Cooperare 2009) and 'the eradication of mafias from Italian social life' (Libera 2009a: 12).
9. Presenting the views of state institutions and Libertà, in order to elucidate the reasoning behind confiscations and cooperatives, I quote from a few selected sources (as the available material is enormous), including websites, leaflets, posters, booklets, press releases and conference papers on 'the anti-mafia' that I followed. I focus on three main sources: a collaborative book of the Ministry of Interior, called *L'uso sociale dei beni confiscati* (The social use of confiscated assets), edited by two key Libertà administrators (Frigerio and Pati 2006); the website of the Consortium, the state apparatus responsible for the allocation of assets to cooperatives in Spicco Vallata, discussed later in this chapter (Focus 2001) as well as its publication *Focus*; and finally, Libertà's leaflets, newsletters, the magazine bearing its name and its website (Libera: 2009, as these unsigned documents represent the NGO at large). All of the above are cited as primary sources.
10. Specifically the *Agenzia Nazionale per L'Amministrazione e La Destinazione Dei Beni Sequestrati e Confiscati alla Criminalità Organizzata* (National Agency for Assets Seized and Confiscated from Organised Crime).
11. These ideas reflect broader tendencies in legal theory in Italy and can be seen in the light of Carl Schmitt's jural theory of the 'state of exception', according to which the sovereign is 'he' who decides in exceptional situations (2008). Hence the Italian state justifies its toughened criminal procedure (Ingroia 2009) as 'extraordinary measures' required counteracting the de-legitimisation of the state's monopoly of violence by the mafia, even incorporating values bordering on being undemocratic and in potential violation of the European Convention on Human Rights, chapter 6. Current Italian theorists who find kinship with Schmitt's theorem include Giorgio Agamben (2005): his figure of the '*homo sacer*', set inside/outside the conventional realm of the law in a permanent state of exception, has been dominant in recent social science, impacting on anthropology as well. Schneider and Schneider (2002a) also discuss aspects of this problematic of 'emergency' in anti-mafia legislation.
12. The means of production (land and machinery) of the anti-mafia cooperatives are owned by the state: this also refers to the confiscated Cento winery where vinification and bottling takes place. Part of the funding for the renovation of the Cento came from the European Union's PON-5 programme to assist development and security against illegality. The cooperatives retain the total control of the use-value (legally: usufruct) of the assets nevertheless.
13. It should be noted that in this work the idea of clanship is emic to Sicily. For Morgan and Engels, before the introduction of private property and the construction of the familial unit around it, the basic structure of kinship was the matrilineal clan. The work of Goody (1976; 1983; 2000) and Tillon (1983) informs my own argument on 'clan' land tenure and the state policy

- to tackle it, as it forms analogies with mafia and the anti-mafia confiscations. Clanship has a different meaning in Goody's discussion of landed property and family (1983). In Spicco Vallata, it is dramatically different, linked to mafia. Conversely, 'family', a unit based around the household, is linked with transmission of property matrilineally or directly to women, through the process Goody called diverging devolution (1983). Blok notes how blood imagery is evoked in Sicily to constitute mafia, whose main unit is 'the family' (2000: 87–89). In my ethnography, 'clan' rather than 'family' is the state and mass-media kinship metaphor to identify a mafia coalition.
14. Arci, an openly leftist association, is the largest politicised association in Italy. The cooperative Lavoro e Altro was intricately linked with the Arci branch of Palermo, which was particularly active in the 'anti-mafia struggle', as well as in issues of anti-racism, anti-sexism and environmental activism. Arci was openly critical of Libertà's non-political view of the anti-mafia movement.
 15. The Falcone, Borsellino and Libermanima cooperatives were guided by Libertà's Palermo. There were Libertà members in the administration teams of both cooperatives.
 16. Marx's ideas on primitive accumulation are enlightening in terms of his critique of property in *Capital* (1990: 877–879) as a hub of historical social relations obscuring processes of violence: state or private force. Arlacchi argues extensively on the theme of 'mafia primitive capital accumulation' (Arlacchi 1986; Cacciola 1984).
 17. Giovanni Falcone was the magistrate/anti-mafia expert who prosecuted Cosa Nostra for a decade until the Spicco Vallata mafia executed him in 1992. Paolo Borsellino died in a mafia-caused explosion one hundred days later.
 18. As mentioned earlier, in 1992, Barbeto killed Giovanni Falcone, amongst 150–200 other people. In 1995, he also strangled and melted in acid Giovanni Di Matteo, a thirteen-year-old child, the son of a rival *mafioso* (Lodato 1999). These atrocities gave the place its bad reputation. Barbeto lived almost all his life in San Giovanni. His nicknames speak for his fierce activity: 'u verru' (the pig) and 'u scanacristiani' (the strangler).
 19. This colloquial word is the demonym used for people from San Giovanni.
 20. I shall use the terms 'informants', 'interlocutors' and 'research participants' interchangeably. My preferred term is the latter but it was not applicable in all instances. Especially people close to mafia would adamantly refuse the idea that they were 'interlocuting' with me, so I am respecting their idea by opting for 'informants', a term whose uni-directness might be more appropriate in their case.
 21. Di Maggio (2009) traces this through organised questionnaires, using categories such as 'anti-mafia commitment', 'liberation', and 'change' in order to map what motivated people to apply for a job in the cooperatives.
 22. During fieldwork I witnessed visits by journalists from across the board and around the world who wanted to interview anti-mafia cooperative members: the Italian *National Geographic*, a glossy magazine from Germany, the *Guardian*, and even a culinary review from Japan. Titles they published describing the case included words such as 'revolution', 'heroes' and 'change'. Some reporters expressed distress, such as the *Daily Telegraph's* envoy: 'It was

heart-warming to see this brave soul so commemorated, but as we wandered the vines and [Checco] spoke of ‘localism’ and the measures necessary to prevent the Mafia themselves penetrating the committees set up to manage the confiscated land, I couldn’t help partaking of that fatalism which so many have seen as intrinsic to the Sicilian character . . .’ (Self 2009). The *Guardian* underlines continuities in the anti-mafia movement: ‘The estate is run by the Borsellino co-operative . . . “So many courageous men lost their lives in the fight against Cosa Nostra,” said [Checco] as we walked through the fields. “Now, we, the new generation, are finally able to finish the work that they so bravely began”’ (Rafanelli 2008).

23. All photos, unless otherwise stated, are by the author.
24. Latifundism, a capitalist type of estate-based agrarian political economy (Schneider and Schneider 1976: 7; see also Petruszewicz 1996).
25. The adage implies that pleasure comes from controlling people, rather than enjoying material luxuries. Arlacchi also notes the lack of conspicuous consumption among Sicilian *mafiosi*, unlike, for example, Neapolitan *cammoristi* (1986; 1993; 2010).
26. My stay as an Erasmus exchange student during 2002 and previous visits to Sicily had familiarised me with such particularities of life, ranging from local *trattorie* to names of mafia clans, while my engagement with translations of contemporary Italian poetry added an insight into a field many people appreciated. Villagers were often eager to discuss anything from D’Annunzio’s verse to perceptions of Berlusconi abroad.
27. It is worth noting that the bilingual environment of my research implied different, class-informed registers of language: the Palermitan administrators spoke ‘proper’ Italian, whilst the local workers often spoke in dialect. I acknowledge this in my translations, opting for colloquial words to transmit some of the ‘colour’ of Sicilian and also to underline how language reflects class in cooperatives.
28. The term viticulture will be used throughout this book to describe agricultural based on vineyards.
29. Women, in San Giovanni and Spicco Vallata at large, rarely work outside the household, and most definitely never in the fields, as I discuss in chapters 6 and 7. Gendered issues defined the local political economy in and around the cooperatives; drawing from the often gender-informed data, I aim to elucidate this facet of people’s livelihoods in the ethnography.