

## Chapter 9



# Divided by Land

## *Mafia and Anti-mafia Proximity*

The co-ops' story offers an interesting case study of the relationship between agrarian transformation and civil society/political projects. But it is also an insight into the juncture between similarity and difference in an agrarian society. After all, although most of their revenue came from rackets and drugs chains, many contemporary Sicilian *mafiosi* have been landowners for three or four generations (Blok 1988; Santino 2006; Dickie 2013). In Spicco Vallata in particular, a realm where viticulture reigns over all other economic activity, confiscations fragmented the areas of land that mafia families held, especially vineyards, which were divided into a number of plots (Lupo 2011). Breaking land down in pieces meant that co-op members were exposed to everyday interactions with many *mafiosi* who still cultivated the nearby plots ('family' land) that had not been confiscated.

Neighbourhood (*vicinato*) was a local concept, popular with *mafiosi* and anti-mafia co-op members alike. I will here analyse neighbourhood where social difference is examined through interactions between people categorised as mafia and antimafia respectively. We have already seen the odd peasant coexistence of mafia and anti-mafia agents. As the spatial play-out of power struggles and difference arises at the neighbourhood level, this chapter focuses on those dynamic sets of relations pertaining to neighbourhood. Through it, I explore the social consequences of agrarian change and the condition of neighbourhood as a socio-spatial proximity of agents with different, and indeed inimical but surprisingly not irreconcilable, views of the world, despite the polemic undertones in their contact and conduct (Chauveau and Richards 2008; Cramer and Richards 2011). The aim is to embed this discussion in the broader theorem of similarity and difference between mafia and anti-mafia and critically contribute to definitions of difference, proximity and neighbourhood.

I will then examine the social configurations that follow land restitutions and are related to political projects of land reform (mainly, post-socialist, as per Hann 2007 and Verdery 2002; 2003; 2004). The point of comparison here is the role that land redistribution plays in political projects that try to lead, and claim to represent, community as 'amending

wrongs' of the past (Fay and James 2009). The social presence of *mafiosi*, a lingering social reality of active neighbourhood agents in the face of restitutions, distinguishes the Sicilian context from that of post-socialist discussions. Here, rather than pores in the land, we have on-going neighbourliness.

In this chapter I again highlight how these relations are on-going and rooted in projects that overlap as well as how this elucidates the embeddedness of co-ops in surprising social liaisons. Previously, such a point was made evident through discussions of the curious overlaps between anti-mafia and kinship or mafia and community that presented cooperatives with some contradictions. They were also brought forward in the unexpected divisions that ostensibly unifying ideologies of activism or practices of gossip brought about. Here the border-setting and the border-crossing between mafia and anti-mafia, from claiming ideological difference to re-affirming similarity, become more tangible. It is a situation that crucially unsettles the enclaving attempts in anti-mafia co-ops and illustrates their members' broader embeddedness in local sociality.

With confiscations and their shortcomings, we are being reminded of James Scott's reading of high modernism (1998; 2010; 2012), an idea of statal projects' detachment from grassroots realities in a critical fashion. While Scott conceives of the state as a field of externality towards society, in Sicily the anti-mafia state project competes for local ideas of community with the mafia. The intersubjective neighbourliness between people on each side nuances their antithesis. What is more, because an uncomfortable neighbourhood is not seen as a static outcome of state-level shifts but as the live interaction of players with different agendas on the ground, as per debates on post-socialism (as per Pine 2007 and Alexander and Humphrey 2007), this last chapter's narrative also brings us back to the 'from clans to co-ops' thought pattern of the book. Not all mafia land was confiscated, obviously, and that allowed for the paradox of a clans and co-ops neighbourhood.

## **The Story of Two Land Tracts**

### ***The Land Confiscations***

I have already described how Matteo Mandola, the managing director of the Consortium Progress and Law, argued that state confiscation 'corrects' the *mafioso* 'usurpation' of land that had 'originally been in the common domain' and was available to all. Mandola, along with other lawyers and legislators involved in the confiscations and distribution laws,

told me that the law's aim was to isolate the *mafiosi* and place them at some distance from local people. The ideas on bad kinship and the exclusion of the co-ops from kin connectedness was part of this framework (see chapter 5, especially pages 103–109). This claim was also made to me several times by many cooperative administrators.

And yet, this insisted-upon creation of social distance and formation of a community immune from the mafia never fully materialised. What posed as a massive difference that was deemed unbridgeable was in fact a condition of oft-radical similarity in a reality more complicated than analyses of the anti-mafia project's legal-political configuration might suggest (Gunnarson 2015; Orlando 2003). This was similarly played out between local anti-mafia co-op members and local *mafiosi*, with co-op administrators more aware of drawing lines – and boundaries – between mafia and anti-mafia. As a member of the Falcone co-op, manual labourer Enzo, told me once,<sup>1</sup> 'Plot boundaries are an issue made of people, not just borders.... They are what people make of them'.

To understand this complexity, it is worth considering again the nature of the confiscations law, which *did not* apply to all mafia land in Spicco Vallata. The agricultural tracts considered in this book have different histories of acquisition, but in local contextual terms all fall into two broad categories. One sort comes to a mafia family as dowry or through the legitimate savings of the *mafioso* himself; in local discourse this is typically described as *familiare* (family) land. The other sort comes to a *mafioso* as a result of his illicit activities – for instance, extortion or money laundering – and is typified as *propria* (own) land. It was only this land that eventually became confiscated.

*Mafiosi* tended to buy, using drug funds, all the land tracts surrounding their original familial land, thereby raising their property and clout exponentially. As the outer circles had been acquired through drug money, they were confiscated. The anti-mafia cooperatives therefore 'ringed in' the mafia, since the latter had its legitimately acquired land in the centre of a series of concentric circles of owned property. This situation allowed for constant interaction between anti-mafia cooperative members and *mafiosi* through the contiguous land plots each controlled.

This is where a second central issue arises, one that runs through this book's analytical narrative; it concerns the social divisions within the anti-mafia cooperatives, which reflect a history of social relations that pre-dates the co-ops. As we have seen, the local worker-members cultivated small tracts of land (mainly vineyards) and worked for wages in agrarian settings for generations. Importantly, most had a history of agrarian labour on *mafiosi* land and longer histories of social relations

with them, while administrators, on the other hand, rarely, if ever, visited the land plots. These two issues interact in the uncomfortable coexistence of family and confiscated land in the Sicilian landscape, as both workers and administrators were exposed to neighbourhood and degrees of familiarity with *mafiosi*. The co-op members had different reactions to these contacts, which often were related to their social background. Such contact with *mafiosi* infuriated the co-ops' administrators, while Spicco Vallata workers saw it in a positive light, as I shall show through two stories below.

### **'Familiare' Land: The Story of Antonia Barbetto's Plot**

The Barbetto family has been central to the history of Spicco Vallata, Sicily, and indeed Italy itself. Their patrilineal genealogy produced three generations of leading figures of Cosa Nostra. The Barbetos, a multigenerational family of *mafiosi*, owned plots of land near their now-abandoned home on the outskirts of San Giovanni. The vineyards on this land were inherited by Antonia Barbetto, who then handed them to her older sons Giovanni and Vincenzo, both *mafiosi*, who were arrested in 1996 (Giovanni had already been convicted in absentia). The vineyards had not been confiscated because the mother was not part of the mafia and thus her assets did not derive from 'mafia activity'. The vineyards were therefore deemed *familiare* (familial) property.

Strolling around the impressive villa of the Barbetos with some of the Falcone cooperative workers, I ended up walking amongst the vines. Adamo and Nicola, both workers of the co-op, recalled a time in the mid-1990s when they worked together there on the harvest and agreed that the plots had, until recently, been very productive. Both men remarked what 'a pity' it was that, although not confiscated, these vineyards now lay uncultivated. They inspected the vines and showed me that the soil was no longer productive.

Antonia Barbetto had never involved herself in managing this vineyard, nor did she start to after Giovanni was imprisoned. Adamo said that he 'felt for the vineyard: 'It just shows how they feel for it . . . the mother could not cultivate this *familiare* plot, which she feels belongs to her son.' I enquired further as to what the workers' designation of this plot as '*familiare*' meant. Initially I had thought that, if vineyards belonged to a *mafia* family, they would be confiscated. Discussing these questions with lawyers and the Consortium administrators responsible for overlooking the confiscations project, I learned that the term 'familial' implied belonging to the family unit. From the point of view

of land confiscation, the term designated plots that had not been confiscated since it had been proven that the *mafioso* owner had acquired them through means other than the ‘usurping’ entailed in ‘mafia accumulation activity’ (Frigerio and Pati 2006). Inheritance and dowry were the main techniques by which *mafiosi* acquired land tracts with *familiare* status. In the particular case at hand, Antonia Barbeto had bequeathed the legal title to a male child (a *mafioso*).

Adamo and Nicola are linked to this story of landownership through two kinds of relations: co-op membership on the one hand and a history of labour, as well as a relationship, with the Barbetos on the other. Through the land, they find themselves linked both to the cooperative, as members, and to the Barbetos, as ex-workers. These two kinds of contradictory affiliations each stand for the two axes of relations described earlier: the relationship between mafia and anti-mafia and between local anti-mafia workers and *mafiosi*. These are sets of relationships that are historically defined; for workers, they involve their own histories of work relations. *Familiare* also gives a sense of the familiarity between *mafiosi* and their old workers, in the sense of ‘belonging to the family, not to the mafia’. In both cases, familiarity muddies the purities on which the anti-mafia project relies. Neighbourhood with *mafiosi* does this also. The co-existence of mafia *familiare* land side-by-side with their confiscated plots yielded surprising continuities in local practices. As with kinship and ideas of community, familiarity and neighbourhood belong to histories and continuities of social relations. I shall consider this further through the story of the plots of Mimmo Torinese, another local *mafioso*.

### **‘Propria’ Land: Torinese’s Confiscated Tracts (and the Neighbourhood Thereof)**

Torinese was a renowned farmer. Like many of the village *mafiosi*, he had invested racket money in buying land, in addition to and adjoining his original familial land in a conscious strategy to expand. Some of his plots were now confiscated and managed by the Falcone cooperative, and some still belonged to his family due to their *familiare* status. Some cooperative members had vivid memories of working for the Torinese family. Even today, there were continuities with that recent past: two cooperative seasonal workers, outside their co-op work, still sporadically worked for the Torinese on their many *familiare* plots. Many of these Torinese plots, in turn, bordered on plots confiscated from them and now managed by the cooperatives.

When convicted, a *mafioso* has to prove the innocent origin of his assets in order to retain them (see also page 14). If he cannot support his claim that he acquired a landed piece of property in lawful ways, the property is presumed to be the outcome of his mafia activity and is thus associated with his mafia membership. By contrast to the category *familiare*, this is locally called 'own property' (*'proprietà propria'*). Land that falls into this category is confiscated because it is legally presumed to have been acquired through illicit means.

For example, Mimmo Torinese owned a vineyard in the territory of Reale (a Spicco Vallata village) that was used to launder drug money in the mid-1980s. The *mafioso* was the San Giovanni mafia leader from 1996 until his conviction in absentia in 1999 (he had taken over local mafia power after the downfall of the Barbetos). The land plot was confiscated in 1999 and passed to the property of the state. The Reale municipality then transferred its usufruct rights to the Falcone anti-mafia cooperative under a renewable free lease contract, valid for thirty years. Additionally, a related winery building surrounded by these vineyards had finally been confiscated from Mimmo Torinese in 2007. From March 2010 onwards, it became Cento, the cooperative's winery, bottling under the Falcone label.

Right next to a piece of confiscated land now used by the Falcone cooperative and also lying beside their winery, itself the product of confiscation and allocation, was a Torinese *familiare* tract that had not been confiscated. Early one April morning, Enzo and Piero, two local worker-members from the Falcone co-op, were working in this part of the Falcone vineyard with the Torinese *familiare* plot just a few yards away from them. Suddenly, Enzo's cell phone rang. It turned out to be Mimmo Torinese's forty-year-old son Ciccio, just out of prison, complaining, in the Sicilian dialect, that there was a problem with plot boundaries: he was asking to meet someone from the Falcone to discuss it.

The incident caused distress amongst Falcone administrators. Its president, Luca and its vice president Mina were particularly upset. They were absolutely against a meeting with people they were 'unable to reason with'. They insisted that the cooperative should call in the police as soon as possible; even if there was to be a meeting to discuss property boundaries, they wanted the *Carabinieri* to be present. 'Our boundaries are not to be negotiated at a *mafioso's* phone call; these lands are not *just* plots; the state is invested in them,' Luca asserted to me. However, after they saw that the manual workforce team was adamant that there should be a meeting with the *mafioso* neighbour on this issue, Luca and Mina yielded to the workers' demands.

The meeting was therefore arranged for the next morning at 6 AM. It took place at exactly the boundary spot between the Torinese family plot and Falcone's confiscated plot at dawn. The facial features of the *mafioso* were barely visible in the dim light, causing some distress; but the meeting went well. When I asked Enzo about it later in the day, he reported that '[Torinese] is a well-mannered gentleman. . . . His ways were noble and kind and he was very gentle and careful with us'.

Familiarity can take many forms. Having one's cellular phone number marks a familiarity already unacceptable for co-op administrators. Answering a phone call acknowledges that familiarity (Archambault 2013). Moreover, Ciccio Torinese's 'noble and kind ways', in addition to the fact that the co-op members had past or on-going work relations in that *familiare* plot, carried an intersubjective understanding on mutual sharing of the land. The remembrance of the 'past continuous unity of these plots', as Nicola suggested, was juxtaposed against the current experience of working a now-fragmented domain of confiscated and *familiare* plots where the historical connections of land had been reconfigured – leaving behind, however, on-going, lively neighbourhood relations between mafia and anti-mafia. For those cooperative members who, like Nicola, remembered working past harvests for the old *mafiosi* owners on these same plots, this sense of a 'lost past' was intensified. The remembrance of the land plots' unity reinforced the sense of neighbourliness that local workers maintained, namely that the boundaries of confiscated plots were less rigid in practice than in legal discourse.

What is more, Enzo and Piero realised that (ironically?) Torinese *did* have a rightful claim over the disputed piece of land between the two properties; he proved this to them by providing the legal documents during the meeting. Surprised, the co-op members checked them and admitted that the *mafioso* was legally right; they had, albeit by accident, extended their plot's boundaries, and trespassed on their neighbour's *familiare* property. The prestige of the *mafioso*, proven by his demeanour as reported by Enzo and Nicola, made him loom great; more imposing a figure than the current spread of his holdings would suggest him to.

## Of Neighbourhood and Difference

These two stories show splits in landownership and across the relations between co-op members. Both hamper the working of the anti-mafia project. They revolve around the kinds of engagements and continuities with mafia that the project finds it hard to deal with: the perseverance



of social relations (including labour histories or senses of ‘noble and kind ways’). In my discussions with co-op members, the term ‘neighbourhood’ was not merely about physical space but appeared, rather, as a relational concept: it referred to the material realities of bordering plots across which people came into contact. As Adamo said, ‘Here are the confiscated plots [managed by cooperatives], there are the non-confiscated plots [still managed by *mafiosi*], and among them, there is life’. The conceptual significance of their social experiences is important: the local workers, because of their long relation with the plots and with some *mafiosi* neighbours, were hardly repelled by *mafiosi*.

The task here is to decipher why the term ‘neighbourhood’ is not only true to the empirical data (*vicinato*) but is also analytically useful. Neighbourhood life can be a vigorous social process that embraces localised, face-to-face sociality, morality and lifeworlds, a scale of relations altogether different from the logic of groupings posed in difference. A stress on intersubjectivity and the formation of a ‘we-relationship’ among neighbours is relevant here (Henig 2012: 16–18). Such intersubjectivity within and across groups is shaped through a correlation of continuity and change: the ‘we’ can at times cut across the mafia/anti-mafia divide and associated differences. This ‘we’ can survive (or even be reinforced by) major changes: in the case of Henig, post-socialism and post-war transition in Bosnia.

The anthropology of post-socialist contexts has largely set the scene for exploring land restitutions and their socially configured outcomes. Interestingly, that is shaped in a ‘from plan to clan’ formation – from centralism to disarray (Stark 1990) – whereas this ethnography follows a ‘from clans (to state) to co-ops’ movement. At any rate, the conceptualisation of social relations around land found in this anthropology of ‘transition’ does not suffice to adequately tackle cases such as the Sicilian land restitution and resulting uncomfortable neighbourhood with *mafiosi*.

To be sure, post-socialist literature has noted the assignments of land rights to ‘corrective’ or ‘successor’ cooperatives in decollectivisation processes (Hann 2007: 302). In Sicily, a conceptual and political relocation of what land signifies is also pursued via a long and politicised (often anti-mafia) history of cooperativism that emerged from grassroots needs for organisation across local peasants (see Rakopoulos 2014a). But while in the post-socialist literature restitution laws appear as a meta-narrative (one following and renouncing socialism), the land’s new (but *not* post-mafia) configurations in Sicily are parts of a political project to overcome the (still active) *mafiosi*.



In the theory stemming from transition literatures, land is typically understood to be 'embedded' in the broader social relations in whom actors managing property are involved (Hann 1998: 1; 2009). In Sicily, there are tensions in the corrective cooperatives' internal relations, engendering further differentiations among members in the management of land. But unlike a transition, we have the coexistence of a project – the anti-mafia – and a group that revolves around historical but ongoing sets of social relations – the mafia – often entangled between them in 'community' rhetoric.

This coexistence results in people feeling that they belong to sets of social relations – involving locality or work history – that pre-date the cooperatives and the anti-mafia project and often contradict it. To highlight, as in post-socialism, the 'embeddedness' of landed property here (as per Hann 1998) would tell a different story – especially in the Sicilian context of contested views of community and concurrent sets of social relations. As Peters (2009: 99; see also Thelen 2011) pointed out, models like 'embeddedness', stemming from post-socialist contexts, cannot be universal. In Sicily, rather than 'embedded' land in transition, we encounter belongings of people in diverse yet overlapping threads of social relations. These people are 'embedded' themselves in nexuses of relations that can, if momentarily, transcend their land boundaries and their ideological divides.

The continuities, fissures and disjunctures that followed the restoration laws in transitory environments play out on two levels: firstly, across the 'murky' boundaries of land plots; and secondly, between local forces on the ground and a newly centralised power. Instead, in Sicily, continuities and fissures are deployed as parallel and competing realities between the social presence of *mafiosi* and an anti-mafia project developing alongside them. Let's unpack this more carefully.

Firstly, to analyse neighbourhood, ethnographers of post-socialism stressed the fluidity and 'porosity' of land restored to communities (Verdery 2003; Humphrey and Verdery 2004). Katherine Verdery's 'politics of elasticity' underlines that new land claims arising from restitutions involved murky negotiations, often imperilling local relations (1996: 159). A lot of debate has stemmed from Verdery's notion of 'fuzzy' property, focusing on the ambiguities of configurations that lack clarity of borders and ownership (Sturgeon and Sikor 2004: 4) or associating the temporal aspects of this fuzziness with the endurance of social ties (Fay and James 2009: 9). The case of 'clans to co-ops' in Sicily, instead, illuminates two concurrent (rather than successive) social realities in which agents form active and intersubjective relations. What lingers is not inertia from the

past. Clans are not gone, giving way to co-ops fully, although their land is bestowed to the co-ops (Bucchieri 2003). In these concurrent and even competing realities, the fact that the anti-mafia project and mafia-familiarity social relations are supposed to be mutually exclusive does not prevent the crossing over of (existing) categories of 'us' and 'them'. This crossing and its communication do not take place through a fuzziness of property (Sturgeon and Sikor 2004); in fact, the property categories (confiscated and *familiari*) are firm, and the way legal documentation supports them is not disputed (as shown in the Ciccio Torinese case). The contact between people does not take place through 'pores' across land plots but through a neighbourhood across different plots.

Secondly, while a discrepancy between local forces and the state is also central to the post-socialist literature, the Sicilian case elucidates their interrelation, especially in co-op administrators' practices. In Verdery's work, the distance between conception and execution of a land restoration law (2003: 380–82) appears beneficial, toting the side of local political elites, who enact laws in ways that deviate from the government's planning (2003: 388). Elsewhere – and proposing a *seeing like a mayor* approach, to complement Scott's *seeing like a state* one – Verdery notes that, in Romania, 'a local sphere obedient to central directives was a laughable image' (2002: 27; 2003). In line with Scott's overarching argument, the anthropology of local elites seems to underline the distance of the state's meaning from the imaginings of those supposed to enact its aim locally. Similarly, Creed points to the oxymoron of 'conflicting complementarity' between the state and locals' strategies in land restitution (1998: 8). The anti-mafia cooperatives' administrators, however, are endowed with a sense of the state's mission (as illustrated in Luca's words: 'These lands are not *just* plots; the state is invested in them'). In this process of protecting and ignoring what the state 'is seeing' on the local level, Sicilians are promised (and to an extent experience) a movement, from a 'malignant' private to a 'benign' public apparatus – from clans to co-ops. This also stands in contrast with post-socialism, where conflicts are produced because of a movement from the state to the private, 'from plan to clan' (Dunn 2004: 79).

Sicily's case, therefore, helps us situate belonging and difference in dynamic grounds. In Spicco Vallata, there are two different realities (the anti-mafia and mafia) that emerge and interact through the fact of geographical proximities. The cooperative members mediating this interaction belong to sets of relations that involve *both* mafia and anti-mafia. We encounter sets of categories that correspond to the concepts of the anti-mafia project (e.g., 'mafia') but also others that undermine it (e.g.,

locals, Palermitans, neighbours). They are all in constant renegotiation through neighbourliness, which consists of phone calls, memories and conflicts.

Neighbourhood bridges difference and similarity in the proximity between mafia and anti-mafia agents. It is not just the spatial fact of closeness (or even of social relations) but also the closeness of sets of relations that were not *supposed* to be close to each other in the first place because of the anti-mafia project's political nature. The spatial play-out of power struggles and difference is set on the stage of neighbourhood. This stands as the definition of uncomfortable neighbourhood – the socio-spatial proximity of two opposing sets of relations, with their respective views of the world, that emerges out of an interaction and a struggle over the souls of 'the community', that is, the people through which the anti-mafia tries to articulate to their project. These people, as the familiarity raised through a phone call might illustrate, can partake both in the anti-mafia project and in local sets of relations where *mafiosi* are present. In turn, this works as the definition of neighbourliness, which alleviates the uncomfortable condition of neighbourhood. A return to ethnographic discussion will illuminate this further.

### **Continuities with Uncomfortable Neighbours: Moral Borders and Lines of Contact**

In the story discussed earlier, I noted the contiguity with the Torinenses' plots (confiscated and *familiare*) and the contact with Ciccio Torinese. Opting for a non-conflictual and 'civilised manner', cooperative members saw the *mafioso* through a prism of neighbourliness rather than sharp moral difference. It is through such communication that people of the manual workforce team actually experienced the boundaries of the confiscated plots as lines of contact. As Enzo told me, land plot neighbourhood was an 'issue made of people, not just borders'.

In fringe cases, administration members thought that it was impossible to establish any genuine contact with *mafiosi* neighbours: their actions, it was believed, would always be driven by treachery. Further, the members thought that the boundaries between the *familiare* and the confiscated plots needed to be defended. For most administration cooperative members, the *mafiosi* belonged, as Mina, its vice president, told me, to a 'different universe', marked by a separate capacity for moral judgement. In defending physical land boundaries and by invoking the authority of law, Mina expressed her sense of this utter difference, protecting what

she saw as the moral world of the cooperatives. For this reason, the general belief was that court action was the most appropriate solution to all problems regarding disputes with the mafia.

Some of the Falcone administration members, in fact, stated that dealing with plot boundaries was a strategy of ‘defending their borders’, while others expressed the view that land boundaries were akin to ‘borders of morality and legality’. Sometimes, they explicitly asserted that ‘the Italian state was represented’ by and within the confines of their plots, therefore marking *familiare* land as not just ‘non-state’ but as a threatening, ‘anti-state’ land. As Silvio, the president of Falcone, put it in an interview, there was ‘a lot to defend in our boundaries, not just land, but whatever both we and the state stand for, in Sicily’.

Many manual worker-members, on the other hand, felt some degree of familiarity with *mafiosi* and insisted that these ideas of the administration were out of kilter. As Pippo stated, adding ironic emphasis to the word ‘mafia’,

they [the administrators] think we border *The Mafia* [*faccimu confini con A Mafia*], some abstract thing; in fact, our plot neighbours are actually people from the village; yes, they are what they are, mafia and violent . . . once . . . , but they are farmers, people like anyone else around here, in the end of the day; they have their morals. And, after all, they are our neighbours.

The constitution of neighbourhood here is formed in shaky, intersubjective terms as workers and *mafiosi* are part of the same locality, sharing life conditions, despite the fact that they recognise gaps due to a violent history among them. Both administrators and manual workers relied upon terms that evoked a rhetoric of war: ‘peaceful coexistence’, ‘boundaries’, ‘borderlines’ and ‘diplomacy’. These all constitute a range of metaphors, which implies that the process of cultivating the confiscated land was akin to experiencing the front line of a war. Workers did not use the war metaphor and did not vilify the *mafiosi*. Instead, based on a historical and current intersubjective understanding of neighbourhood as a continuum of plots, they felt that contact with *mafiosi* was the best way to resolve neighbours’ problems.

On one occasion Adamo told me, ‘We, people of the area, have been brought up close to our current neighbours, next door to them’. In this way, their opinion on strategising over relations with *mafiosi* took the past into account. Characteristically, the *Carabinieri* marshal from San Giovanni told me, regarding the relation between local mafia and the anti-mafia cooperatives, that ‘they need to learn to live together’ (*bisogna imparare il convivere*). He argued that the current neighbourhood between

co-op workers and *mafiosi* was an indication of how innocuous ‘the anti-mafia’ was: ‘The cooperatives don’t mean anything to the *mafiosi*; they don’t bother them. The simple fact that they are working right next to Torinese, and he offers them water, for instance, means that the *mafiosi* are just not bothered’.

An active neighbourhood is therefore central to this context, as even the *Carabinieri* officer frames relations through this model. The debates within cooperatives concern what to do with neighbours, who is wrong and who is right. The debate set by a state authority figure external to the co-ops shows how neighbourliness could shape the dynamics of anti-mafia altogether.

This illustrates that the administrators thought of the plot boundaries as borders for their moral universes, while manual workers did not discount the possibility of contact with *mafiosi*. Indeed, to a certain degree, they recognised them as ‘valid’ and potentially moral people. This was rooted in these locals’ common experiences with many *mafiosi* before the confiscations: their tolerance of *mafiosi* was continuous with these we-relationships constructed on through the experiences of living together (*convivere*) with them in the village before the arrests and confiscations. Through this living together and the establishment of a we-relationship predating the cooperatives, neighbourliness developed among them. As a result, the Consortium’s attempts to establish, via the confiscations, a local separation of *mafiosi* from anti-mafia people was not successful.

Neighbourliness meant that turbulent moments with *mafioso* neighbours were resolved through face-to-face meetings. It came to be accepted not only that such a neighbour had a right to ask for a discussion *in quattro occhi, come signori* (face to face, like gentlemen) but also that he could be law-abiding and that his immediate claims might be sound. This face-to-face contact, workers thought, was dignified and gave a sense of good neighbourliness relations, expected from both sides. In this way, they understood social neighbourliness as the mutual constitution of an intersubjective relation stemming from land proximity. Piero, a worker, often de-essentialised *mafiosi* by respecting the documentation that they used to support their legal claims rather than immediately suspecting them. He fiercely criticised the ‘zero-tolerance’ stance of his administrator colleagues, which he found ‘neither polite nor fair’, but also counterproductive:

Because of their lack of experience, these colleagues don’t know how to work these things out. . . . We really have to show that we do not fear contact. What they do, instead, is to just express distress. . . . They have to

see what the ex-proprietor wants, when he approaches them, right there, at the plot. It is a matter of being civilised.

Paying attention to the damage done to local social relations because of the confiscations of certain plots and the non-confiscation of others reveals an interplay between different ideas of neighbourhood. This is based on what a tract's boundaries stand for: moral borders or lines of possible contact. This differentiation mirrors the different values privileged by each co-op member's group. The actual experience of working the land, as suggested by workers, points to a different understanding of neighbourhood than that held by administrators.

The administrators, by and large, subjugated the moral judgement to the political project. The workers, while acknowledging the political project, retained an autonomy of their senses of morality from the political. That autonomy has the shape of precedence over the history of social relationships and to the intersubjective condition of neighbourhood, the way they experience it. Social relations endured and, in fact, were reproduced throughout this patchwork of different pieces of land. In the earlier cases, nevertheless, there were different, divergent senses of how plot boundaries were important affirmations of moral behaviour and of local codes of conduct. Land boundaries represented more than the materialisations of a legal scheme: they also become signifiers of contact with locals and *mafiosi*.

For the anti-mafia administrators, *mafiosi* and their land plots are matter out of place; they were not supposed to be there. The fact that they *are* is the beginning of the act on stage. What has been under question in this analysis is who is proximate to whom among and across the social categories (*mafiosi*, workers, co-op administrators). Difference among cooperative members and between cooperative members and their neighbours is rooted in the fact that *mafiosi* are active actors on the ground. My argument poses an idea of neighbourhood that is experienced in – to an extent – intersubjective ways, to understand how the actors' belonging within one group did not impede them from social interactions with (the) other(s).

## Towards an Anthropology of Neighbourliness

Like borders of a state, the plots' boundaries represented for administrators a clear division (between mafia and anti-mafia) that would be

threatened by social paths of contact connecting the un-confiscated and confiscated land. Invisible borders were set around impalpable structures of 'immaterial but objective' (to nod towards Marx) relationality: gossip, kinship, food ideology. But land bordering was obviously more tangible, both as a separating and as a linking factor. Legal-political projects of land change, such as the anti-mafia (the way administrators served its cause), operate on the assumption of a moral unity of cause – which they realise on grounds they cannot count on (Mundy 2007). The familiarity of neighbourhood breaks the unity of the moral, the political and the legal into its various threads. These threads, visible through the prism of neighbourliness, are composed of sets of social relations that pre-date the cooperatives and the anti-mafia project.

This argument is a contribution to an anthropological take on proximity and the narcissism of minor differences between enemies bordering each other (Blok 1999). Regarding projects of land reform, it stands as an analytical theme with general validity, beyond pointing to the existence of actors' empirical differences on the ground. Difference is mitigated via the threads of sociality that permeate the application of the project. While on paper, mafia and anti-mafia are categories developing on opposite sides of land boundaries; on the ground they are both pregnant with sets of social relations crossing these boundaries. Local people then see land as the fulcrum of these relations; in land's palimpsest, overlapping relations build onto each other, as past obligations persist into the post-confiscation period. A seeing like a state (Scott 1998) approach cannot fully account for this situation. In Sicily, although the confiscations brought rupture, continuities persisted, and they materialised in the neighbourliness of plots and people, not so much *in the face of* the radical legislation's rupture as, indeed, *because of* that rupture.

The confiscations brought mafia and anti-mafia together while attempting to neatly separate them. While unifying claims to community or activism eventually divided co-op people (like elsewhere, see Nuijten 2003), further fragmenting the cooperatives, constituting property on two opposing sets of legal claims actually had surprisingly unifying results. This oxymoron established the existence of concurrent, sometimes overlapping, state and mafia. It marks a difference from Scott's approach as it poses a critique to a unidirectional politics of the institutional gaze. In Sicily, *mafiosi* are active players, who have their own property agendas. Rather than being solely the messy result of, as per Scott, a powerful state's policy, neighbourliness with *mafiosi* is an intersubjective social configuration in which some people from the cooperatives engage, with reluctance. Unlike radical high modernism (and its socialist expressions),



the permeability of *mafiosi* in the landed landscape is posed as an ongoing renegotiation of the state's appropriation and the cooperatives' use of land.

These social relations developing around land are not mediated, as in the post-socialist literature, through 'messy' or 'blurry' boundaries on the ground. Boundaries, of course, do seem blurry to the administrators, who thought instead that a recognition of their neighbours as valid actors would jeopardise the state's project (the state 'invested in this land', as Luca would have it). To see land boundaries as 'blurred' and, by association, landed property rights as 'fuzzy' (as per Verdery), implies acknowledging an original state of firmness or the capacity to standardise these rights. This idea solidifies a view of the 'thingness' of property itself (Beckman and Beckman 2006; Dorondel 2009). Rather, boundaries present conflicting obligations and sets of expectations. Relations do not take place through a 'porosity' of the land (as in Verdery's work) but through neighbourliness. The boundaries are not porous; they are just prone to permeating relations and senses of neighbourliness and are informed by histories of work relations and sharing of locality that make workers implicitly recognise their *mafiosi* neighbours as moral agents.

The laws of restitution, as well as the restituted lands, share a situated domain. The political side of land restitutions is an underlying feature of some of the post-socialist debate. However, it is typically framed in a meta-narrative following (and ditching) 'socialism' – an organisation of property that collapsed alongside its political upkeep. Restitutions 'attempted to create the status pro ante' – returning land to individuals claiming it on the basis of pre-socialist rights (Verdery 1996: 133–36). Unlike this situation, mafia is still a salient phenomenon in Sicily. The post-socialist 'perpetuated political interpretation of agriculture' (Creed 1998: 219) takes place, in Sicily, precisely because of the actual, grounded experience of mafia; the project is one of *anti-* (not post-)mafia.

'Anti-mafia' is less rigid a worldview than it looks because people who partake in it obtain different views and follow different practices vis-à-vis their neighbours than those ascribed to them from the project. While the proximity literature takes difference as largely already constructed, I show the dynamics of proximity/neighbourhood where the actual social boundaries and the very ways to draw them are under dispute. My analysis of the dynamics of neighbourliness turns from the spatial outcome of existing social divisions into the realm in which these divisions, and by implication the meaning and ascription of neighbourhood (and its moral and political and obligations), takes shape through interactions and social processes.

**NOTES**

1. John Davis's comment on land disputes in Italy ('You cannot sue an acre: a boundary dispute is not a dispute with land but with people', 1973: 157) therefore offers an insight unwittingly echoed by Enzo here.