



Cycle de rencontres D3S

« Ouvertures »

Event summary



Criminal networks and local governance in Italy: How the mafia, organized crime, and drugs intersect in Liguria cities and region

■ *Friday, 3 February 2023 - 2.30 - 3.30 pm (CET)
Paris and online*

Event presentation

As part of its “Ouvertures” seminar series dedicated to international research and emerging issues related to illicit drugs, [D3S Program](#) "Drugs, social sciences and societies" of EHESS/INSERM, with the support of IReSP, welcome **Dr. Marco Antonelli from the Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa-Florence** for a talk dedicated to criminal networks and local governance in Italy through the Liguria example.

In an attempt to deconstruct the monolithic representations of mafia and criminal networks, Marco Antonelli mapped out the governance models allowing criminal groups, and in particular through drug trafficking, to infiltrate local public and private structures. Taking the example of the Liguria region, he unveiled the modus operandi related to illicit drug trafficking, taking place at the crossroads of legal and illegal markets and governance schemes in main cities and towns of a borderland region. Based on a thorough study of institutional documents, judicial material, and stakeholders’ interviews, he identified for us key actors involved, the multidimensionality of resources that are mobilized, and shared some perspectives on how cities and communities organize their resilience.

Marco Antonelli is a political scientist, and research fellow at the [Scuola Normale Superiore](#), Faculty of Political and Social Sciences. Marco works on the presence of mafia and criminal groups in Northern Italy, particularly in large coastal cities of Liguria and Tuscany, and the relationship between organized crime, corruption and local governance systems. He is the author of several books on the subject and just published [Punto e a capo. Storia ed evoluzione di mafia e antimafia in Liguria](#). Marco also teaches at the Naval Academy of Italy in Livorno and the University of Pisa, and is responsible for Academic relations for the anti-mafia organization, [Libera](#).

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Trying to map out the intersections of mafia, organized crime and governance structures in Italy, Marco Antonelli proposed to look at the Liguria case and observe how mafia groups (in particular ‘Ndrangheta) operate in the region from **a sociological and political science perspective**. Recalling the limited scientific literature on that case, M. Antonelli shared the results of his extensive fieldwork and some insights of his important empirical corpus (made of documentary sources (press review, judicial records...) and interviews with law enforcement actors, judges, politicians, union members, activists...).

His intervention focused on three main features of mafia intersections with organized crime and governance structures, shedding light on **interactions and modus operandi between legal and illegal activities**: i) mafia infiltration of local councils, ii) electoral consensus building; and iii) with a focus on drug trade, the exploitation of logistic and commercial facilities. These modus operandi have been most observed during the recent expansion phase of Mafia presence (1990-2010) and its most contemporary efforts to consolidate and reorganize its networks and diversify its activities (notably within the

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construction, waste management and tourism sectors). Several cases were presented in municipalities of Bordighera, Ventimiglia and Lavagna where evidence was found of 'Ndrangheta infiltration in services and public infrastructure procurement, gambling and touristic attraction sites - all supported by and associated with the use of violence and mixed electoral supports.

Focusing on the drug trade, our guest speaker detailed **the development of mafia and organized crime activities within commercial structures**, notably in port environments. Stressting on the specificities of these sites (highly industrialized, connecting several cities yet isolated and physically isolated from its host city), M. Antonelli looked at how the changing legal work routines (not. the individualization of dockers, lack of peer-control, diversification of public and private actors), the transformation of shipping activities (high-level of competitiveness) and the expansion of maritime trade favored the development of enabling conditions for mafia and organize criminal groups to create and strengthen ad hoc networks. These observed networks work on fluid structures, more and more dependent on intermediaries, and informal, horizontal "on-demand" recruitments. Making "ports possible sites of crime convergence", mafia groups act as fermenting agents, highlighted M. Antonelli, who articulate and reproduce the pre-existing corrupted practices.

Marco Antonelli concluded his talk by sharing perspectives on **the evolution of anti-mafia responses** and the relative *fatigue* of law enforcement and judicial actors facing ever-evolving and creative criminal actors with limited resources and scarce appetite for more investigation.

The presentation triggered **lots of questions and interactions with the audience** in the room and online – many leading to present more details on some infiltration cases. Questions related to research methodology and the role of trust-building and ethical codes of conduct when doing research about former criminal group and mafia members. Many questions also related to the role of the State and judiciary actors, including the difficulties, yet necessities of cross-border cooperation (notably with France), and discussed the increasing role of civil society actors and organisations in building resilient communities.