

# The 'Ndrangheta between imprisonment reality and organizational ideality: a psychological clinical research.

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*Until the moment before the one we start writing,  
we have the world[...]  
world given en bloc, without neither before nor after,  
the world as an individual memory and implicit potentiality [...]  
Every time the start is that moment of separation from the multiplicity of the possibles:  
to the narrator is the sending away from himself the multiplicity of possible stories,  
so as to isolate and make tellable the single story he decided to tell.*  
Italo Calvino

## Introduction

Mafia is a complex, pervasive, terrifying phenomenon which has troubled the more disparate brains, competences and expertises. Science, specially psychological-clinic, cannot evade producing its cognitive contribution helping in the work due to contrast through cultural and social-clinic intervention instruments. It is necessary to achieve a contingent and severe, composite and deepened contextual and historicized analysis of the psychic displays related to the mafia phenomenon.

Clinical psychology first task, in this way, is to consider the phenomenon's psychological thickness, the social trouble proportions which it has created, by encouraging cognitive emotional and cultural clearness, even when it takes to trouble consciences and disturb society's self evaluation: in clinical research and practice, honest view represent essential precondition for change.

We often see two-dimensional news with forgettable names, scenes of cartridge cases hooped with chalk, sheets on the asphalt, bodies in some way all the same. But they are not all the same.

Victims have names and faces, Mafias have places and towns. South criminal systems present exact anthropological rootings that are identity corpus on which are organized internal structures, rules, criminal activities, psyche of members of Mafia.

To keep said this principle of non-superposition and of specificity, from the writers point of view, it is essential to understand the phenomenon, as often the homogenization of the research objects, of their sources, of their social transformation is the most tricky obstacle to its comprehension (Carli & Panizza, 2003). In the study of criminal systems, without an exact collocation and definition of boundaries, occurs the risk setting to zero the phenomenon's intelligibility and of being psychologically overwhelmed by the abnormal proportions it seems to assume. It appears obvious how the methodological choice to locate our objects of research responds to two requirements that cannot be disregarded: one of epistemological matrix which regards the inquired phenomenon delimitation to individualized the context composition in which it sets (Ceruti & Lo Verso, 1998); the other one of an exquisitely psychological kind which allows to unmask emotional manipulation strategies adopted by Mafias. I.e. task of the psychological – clinic work is to distinguish, redesign, reshuffle, break mafias' almightiness suggestions that feed peoples' fears and defeatism. For this reason, our research group has chosen, in the last years, to operate on the

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psycho-anthropological location of Cosa Nostra, 'Ndrangheta and Camorra to focus a realistic view on the individualization of possibilities to crime and to develop the South.

This clearly without shading the symbolical and factual net of connections which ties the three great mafias, but avoiding worrying and fascinating blow ups which collude with the criminal systems' desiring power.

During our research, our ferryage from a macroscopic to a microscopic paradigm regarded in first place Cosa Nostra, whose organizational complexity leads to interweave a peculiar relation with each territorial context in which it is deeply rooted (Giorgi, Giunta, Coppola & Lo Verso G., 2009).

This prospect of research could not exclude an attention psychologically geographically and culturally aimed also towards the other Mafias. In the awareness of the less accuracy of observation that regard not yet town reality (as it was for research in Sicily) as regional conformation we are today trying to realize a first psychological framing of the meaning features which criminal systems take in the other areas of the south.

The following work is part of this hard and complex cognitive project and it adds a knowledge segment about one of the huger criminal organization in our country: the 'Ndrangheta.

We offer here a calabrian Mafia reading through informations come out from an intervention research on S. Pietro di Reggio Calabria's prison where there are prisoners with a pending conviction for mafia association. After a short description of the 'Ndrangheta structure, the research contribution offers a reading view of the prison by a special instrument of setting observation which allows to context observations in the specific action range.

Backbone of this work, from a theoretic and methodological point of view, is the qualitative analysis of the clinic-social elaboration groups occurred with the prisoners, who represented the main source for new research data.

We also point out the explorative character of this work as there is no literature to which refer.

*'Ndrangheta: organization, structure, peculiarities.*

*Power you don't get, you pick it out*  
Charles De Gaulle

Grown in silence, today 'Ndrangheta is one of the most feared criminal organization, capable chameleon metamorphosis that in a stealthily and imperceptible way towers everywhere above, managing well to conform to the new market's demands, without ever losing its peculiarities, rules and values, such as silence and blood ties (Gratteri, Nicaso & Borelli, 2008).

It doesn't show off a strict and ideological system as Cosa Nostra, or fiercely capitalistic as Camorra, it shows as a bewitched secret, dark world, passionate supporter of definition of a transcendent entity almost even to a legendary fantastic model. And just in virtue of such mythical-anthropological covering, calabrian mafia was able to move undisturbed in the international panorama of illegality, accumulating in these days in its coffer, money for about 44 milliards of dollars.

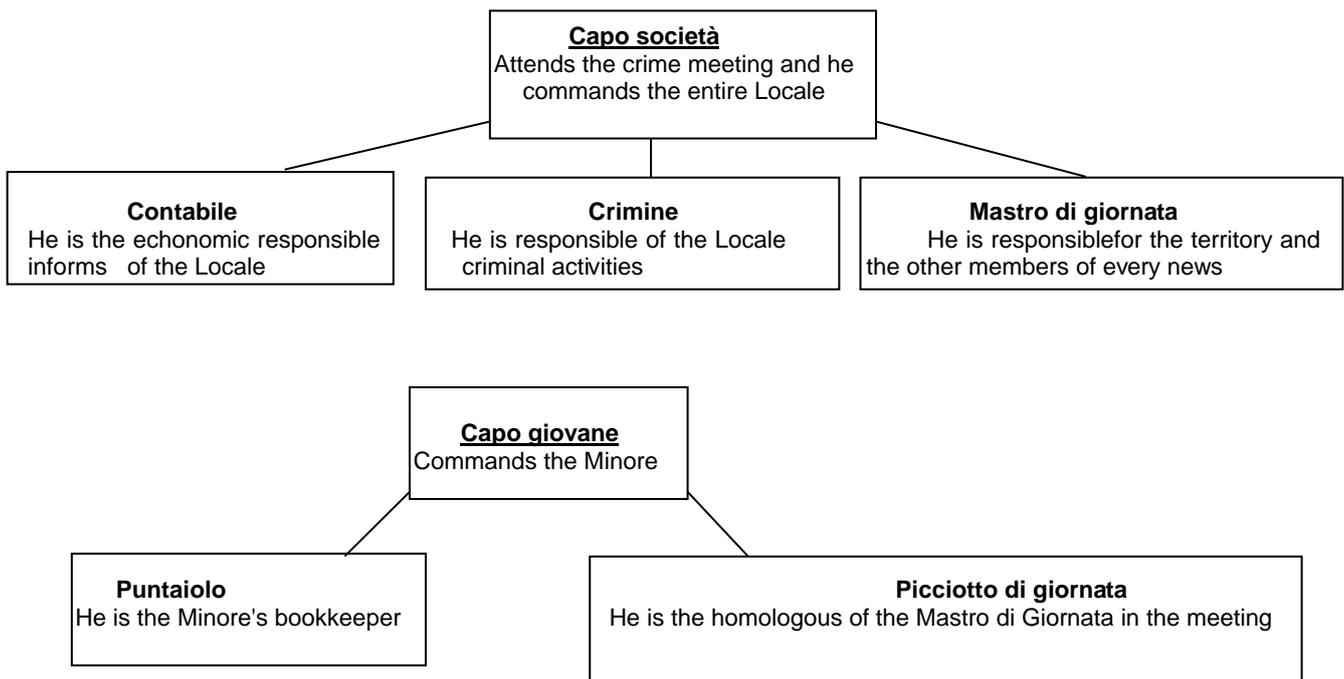
'Ndrangheta is in this way, one of the most rich, aggressive and invading firm. Provided with high infiltration power in the economy and institution, with branches in almost every area in Italy and ramifications in Europe, Africa, Asia, America and Oceania, the 'Ndrangheta is the choice of drug's producers (Arlacchi, 2007). It is in fact the most reliable among mafias: it doesn't speak, nor regret. The familistic asphyxia which chokes co-operations, makes it invulnerable to judicial proceedings' permeability (Bardolati, 2006). This allowed calabrian mafia association to grow and become more and more powerful, basting, especially in virtue of a very precious reserve, an extreme agreement between its interests and the local and national politic class ones so that it could thin and make more and more untraceable the border between corruption crime and mafia association. Substantial contribution to this frame is, without doubt, the recent quality leap made by the mafia coteries, which, preserving their usual fierceness, profess materialism as their belief, crave for power as their lymph, and show entrepreneurship as their face.

Systems that wear out their own countries with a ruthless and amoral rhythm, just to preserve themselves: they move between legality and illegality with agile freedom from prejudice, managing what others cannot or do not want to manage, building criminal empires in the State edges without ever really set themselves against it.

Calabrian mafia shows a different organizational phenomenology and a criminal architecture different from the other mafia. Its profile only recently outlined, sinously moves from “San Luca to Duisburg”: criminal molecules that splatter, spread and reproduce in the world. A liquid mafia which infiltrates everywhere, reproducing, in places far away from where it was born, the same ancient, elementary and efficacious organizing mode. In the same way as Al Qaeda, with an analogous tentacular structure devoid of a strategic direction but distinguished by a sort of organic intelligence, provided with a title of huge, dreadful reliability. This is the secret for 'Ndrangheta. “All in the tension between a remote, rural and archaic here, and a globalized, post-modern and technological elsewhere”(Forgione, 2008).

*'Ndrangheta's structure can be represented in this way:*

*Locale-territorial entity of at least 49 affiliated members*



The difference with Cosa Nostra, from a structural point of view, is represented by the fact that calabrian mafia has an horizontal architecture that spreads around following a circular and underground movement. It never had a supreme and centralized organ with control and management power apart from the Santa, established in the last period.

'Ndrangheta articulates on two small local units, represented by the blood families, who have the role of sentries and executors of territorial activities.

Another substantial difference comes out here with the sicilian organization, where the mafia family doesn't coincide with the blood family, whereas 'Ndrangheta on the contrary the two cells clash absolutely. It's a structural factor which calabrian mafia widely benefited to protect itself from State's attacks, as such order discourages law cooperation that inevitably passes through relatives' treason.

It is possible to suppose this is the main reason for such an exiguous number of law collaborators from 'Ndrangheta. Furthermore, the family levelling can justify the lack of leading characters in the organization. Unlike criminal personalism that is recording in Sicily, where however belongings and obedience to a charismatic leader solder ties and homologate thought, in Calabria seems to rule a sort of power's socialism, which really from a psychological point of view, could be due to a less omnipotent self investment and a more contained use of power as an identity organizer.

In a similar way to sicilian Mafia, 'Ndrangheta is strongly rooted on the territory, but unlike it, despite the closure and the territorial rooting, lives the context as a shaded background: a passage place where economic flows and business cross the region parasiting it without stopping in the place of origin. Rooting doesn't involve and operative presence. This modus of inhabit the territory

could denote one of the reasons for which calabrian mafia has been wrapped up in a thick blanket of mystery which made it invisible to the public opinion's eyes. The men of 'Ndrangheta take advantage of Calabria but they don't invest their money in this country. Illicit capitals, once they are cleaned, are invested in the rest of Italy and abroad. It could be possible to suppose such strategy follows an expansionistic ideal, in virtue of which calabrian mafia's men try to create solid basements for the construction of economic- criminal networks in Europe and in the world.

Jointly there seems to be a scarce real interest for the investment in their own area.

This could depend on the low trust in the territory as a context able to help the increase of wealth or, conversely, could be the outcome of a protectionist ideal, of a psycho-anthropological kind, which prescribes pureness and genuineness of Calabria's productivity. Or more, and this seems the more ascribed thesis, the two opposite vectors support each other having equal and opposite force.

On one side the colonialist vocation pushes to look over the own town boundaries and search for far away paradises, on the other side its own context, literary familistic, it is not spoilt and remains anchored to a bucolic model that autoproves true the impossibility of capitalistic-business speculations. Calabria, not by chance, shows an economy based on farming and fishing, with a very restricted margin of real estate and business activities, i.e. those in which calabrian mafia seems to be more interested, preferring italians and abroad markets and investing in those. In this way, 'Ndrangheta states as one of the more present organization out of Italy, with businesses that regard all the world. The sad reverse of medal for its criminal internationalization seems to be the economic decay of Calabria: one of the most poor regions of our Country.

#### *'Ndrangheta in prison: introduction to the research*

Trying to penetrate such a tangled net as the 'Ndrangheta phenomenon's one it's not simple, even for who moves beyond the law investigation paradigm and is not interested to discover unedited details but to start a systematic reflection upon facts known to the public opinion. Often in the scientific researches that look at so impenetrable phenomenons it is necessary to do the best to found ways to comprehension, dig channels there where there are none and most of all see to a constant interlocution with institutions and judicial professionalisms.

It's the case of the net work which preceded the start off of the research in Reggio Calabria's Prison of S. Pietro.

The detention institution has been a prolific field of study as it allowed not just only to collect first hand data meeting the mafia members, but it also allowed to observe their behaviour in the prison context, giving body to inferences about how the 'Ndrangheta psyche reacts to imprisonment, to the mafia association sentences, to the attitude towards law.

The research program provided three group sessions with a average of 15 prisoners, almost constantly present in each session, recluse in the "high security" section. The project was introduced through preliminary interviews with the manageress of the prison. During a plenary session with the prisoners, the research equipe of the University of Palermo underlined the importance of the psychological vertex and of the possibility to comprehend and to know the criminal phenomenon in Calabria. The groups constructions followed an unstructured form, centred on the voluntary adhesion of the prisoners, who took part to three groupal sessions, each one leaded by an expert groupanalyst and two participating observers.

#### *Empiric research methods*

The research work has been realized starting from the analysis of the transcriptions of the groups done with the high-security prisoners. The formal and contents' complexity of data, as well as the subjective dimensions that compose it, required to resort a qualitative research model which referred to the complexity epistemologic paradigm (Morin, 1986). Currently scientific literature orientates researchers more towards using qualitative instruments able to deal with so wide variables. Among them there is the Grounded Theory (Glasser & Strauss, 1967), which provides an extensive and accurate data collection, through diaries, interviews, focus groups, etc. and their codification in categories (Mantovani, 1997).

The Grounded Theory model is born in the sociology ambit, from the cooperation between Glasser and Strauss (1967). They were the first to successfully prove how sociologic and psychological theories can be founded on qualitative data and how such data have their intrinsic value and must not be intended as quantitative data support (Giorgi, Giunta, Coppola & Lo Verso, 2009). The data analysis takes place through a process defined as encoding, which consists in individualizing in the whole data a conceptual sense or category that is as near as possible to the participants' words. Comparing systematically the different conceptual categories it is possible to abstract a more general sense, which answers to the highlighted categories (Giorgi, Giunta, Coppola & Lo Verso, 2009). In this way the initial codification of initial data leads to the formulation of new hypothesis in comparison to the initial ones. These will be the basis for new interview protocols so that the stages of hypothesis formulation, data collection and analysis coincide. It is clear how in this process the researcher interpretative act becomes explicit. This procedure is applicable by using groups format such as focus group and clinical - social elaboration group. This last instrument was created by us starting from 15 years of research on the mafia phenomenon's psychology.

#### *Clinical-social elaboration groups*

They are dynamic management groups which allow the emersion of memories, experiences, emotion, associations on a particular topic; this last one is not simply a conscious topic of discussion as in the focus groups, but it includes a whole of meanings infinitely extensible, as relations and sense are sought more on an emotional register than on the informational one (Carli & Panizza, 2002; Giorgi, Giunta, Coppola & Lo Verso, 2009). The subject, differently from what happens in the focus group, is not severely preconceived, but only sketched, which allows to pass through rationalizations and other defensive strategies that come out when emotionally hard thematics are faced. This doesn't mean that inside the group it is not possible to talk about subjects extraneous to the official one, yet that oscillations between different modality of reality knowledge and of affective expression are possible.

The leader's interventions are almost of connective kind and carry a connecting function to help interfacing between the participants (Di Nuovo & Lo Verso, 2005).

He acts as glue stimulating the group associative activity because he keeps the thematic coherence functional to the holding and the giving meaning to the narrative and semantic dislocations (Giorgi, Giunta, Coppola & Lo Verso, 2009). The leader, who has to be formed for the management of this relational complexity, supports the various revealing of dynamics and contents come out in the group, centring his attention focus on the circular axis individual- interaction- group (ibidem). Another important element of this group device regards a parameter which has an unavoidable relapse into structural and prosecutive motives: in the elaboration group it is not provided the skimming of the potential participants, but they voluntarily join the experience. This is a side of basic importance, as it is essential a personal share of motivation, which will allow the individual to invest himself in the group, starting a real proper emotional reconfiguration of deep topics, some, like mafia, rooted in the wrinkles of ethnic – anthropological transpersonal.

In the groups narrations that come out during the process are emotions, personality, attitudes and experiences of the participants, who, meeting others' stories, go through their own again, making them more and more explicit and speakable.

#### *S. Pietro's Prison House in Reggio Calabria*

Below is presented the set(ting) analysis grid (Giannone & Lo Verso, 1998), applied on the research made in Reggio Calabria's S.Pietro Prison.

The set(ting) analysis grid is an essentially qualitative instrument, which, in its complexity, can help, whilst observing, to frame a little more widely the variables involved in the therapeutic situation, to centre or to cut out more consciously parts of a much more complex whole, to seek for its connections (Ceruti & Lo Verso, 1998).

The word set indicates characteristics, structural organization, all that is visible, explicitly defined, the organizational context of the therapeutic situation.

The word setting instead intends the therapist theoretic - clinical personal system, which underlies to the creation of the therapeutic situation. We refer, with this, to the invisible, structuring system,

to the whole presuppositions, to the organizers under which such experience ground is created and that represent the precondition so that all this can be conceived, thought, founded.

#### *Set(ting) analysis grid*

<b>Set area</b>	Context: public
	Work order: median group
	Number of participants: 15
	Participants' average age: 35 years
	Disposition: circle
	Intervention area: research in mafia ambit
	Space: it doesn't seem restrictive. Equipped with lights, airconditioners, comfortable arm-chairs
	Observers: two participants observers Leader's characteristics: groupanalyst expert in various groups formats
<b>Setting area</b>	Theoric system: complexity epistemology and subjectual groupanalysis
	Observing style: centred on interactions, unconscious communications, body, non-verbal behaviour, individual-group relation
	Aim: larger comprehension of 'Ndrangheta's anthropo-psychic aspects
<b>Users/clients area</b>	Participants' characteristics: men, average age 30 years, low cultural level, in some cases medium
	Belongings: the belong to criminal mafia associations
	Values: honour, strenght, respect, control
	Motivations: control of the situation, good behaviour to obtain advantages
	Purposes: making understand that 'Ndrangheta doesn't exist
<b>Social area</b>	Cultural and politic positions: strong presence of the mafia phenomenon Social pressing goals: to have power and money, to be somebody, to be respected
<b>Process/ dynamic matrix set(ting) area</b>	Topics faced: detention, future uncertainty, 'Ndrangheta's inhexistance, committed crimes, injustices suffered from magistracy
	Therapeutist style: semi-directive
	Therapeutist interventions: connective
	Communication: fluid, there communicative vehicle
	Language: good level
	Expressed emotions: anger, resignation, mistrust

#### *Research purposes*

As we were saying, the research general purpose is to help the comprehension of psychodynamic aspects related to Calabrian mafia phenomenon and, particularly, to deepen the analysis of the subjects' mental functioning in relation to specific psycho – anthropological sedimentations of calabrian culture. 'Ndrangheta, differently from Cosa Nostra, has not been widely studied and being the mafia phenomenon, excepted its criminal significance, an anthropological fact it is indispensable a reflection on its projections and cultural rootings.

The main question the research group pointed out regards exactly in what these two powerful criminal organizations differ from a structural and psycho-anthropological point of view.

Specifically, it has been tried to understand if the mechanisms beyond mafia psychicism, typical of sicilian bosses, as shown in previous researches (Lo Verso, 1998; 1999; 2003) belong to the 'Ndrangheta men of honour too.

The heuristic effort regarded, moreover, the detection of the psycho-anthropological codes used an their influence on the territory in terms of power and psychological subjection.

*Data analysis: conceptual thematic maps*

The group process analysis is aimed to define the more qualified units, or on the other hand the thematic categories to frame and read it. In consideration of the narrations' and of the extrapolated topics' complexity, thematic-conceptual maps have been used to remember the display of the thematic areas faced in group.

The choice of the analysis categories more qualified to divide the data in segments was made through a comparison between three independent observers who analyzed the subjects' interventions

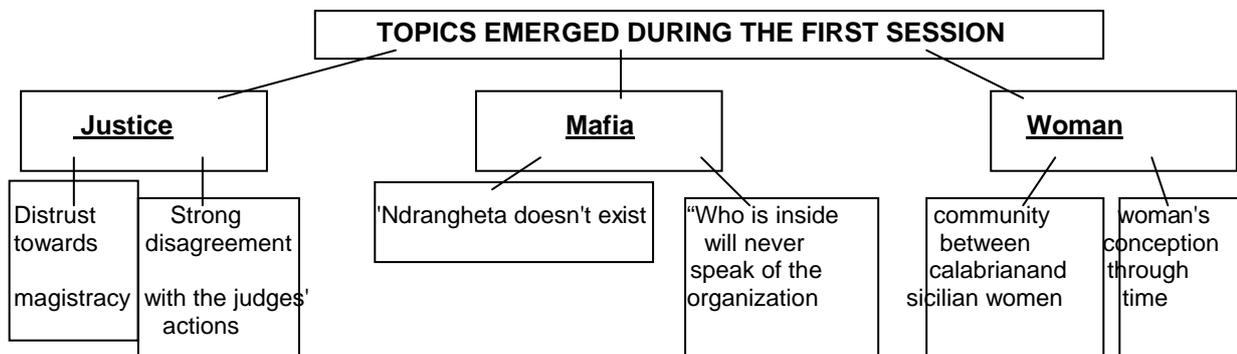
in group; once that the obtained results were compared, the analysis categories were selected.

From this methodological process were drawn out the main topics on which were afterwards constructed three thematic-conceptual maps which refer to the three group sessions made with the prisoners of Reggio Calabria's San Pietro prison house.

The maps' function is to explicitate, clarify and acutely display the significant elements obtained from the elaboration groups.

Following are presented the thematic analysis maps of the groups made in prison

*Pic. 1 – Map – First group session in prison*



A first aspect to point out is the prisoners' enthusiastic adhesion and participation to the group: various and numerous are the questions, requests, resumings applied to the staff that is hardly able to curve the overlapping of interventions and to make respect the setting structural times (pauses, restitutions, session closure). The fervid curiosity expressed by the prisoners towards the research is unusual standing to what revealed in Cosa Nostra's world. The researchers' expectations went in fact

in the direction of a reticent indifference and communicative closure. As a matter of fact, following the participants intervention, denied for a dialogical space seems to have a proper own function: to prove that calabrian mafia is an utopia and to attack the magistracy.

The verbosity communications is counterpointed by the obstinate escapement the topic "Ndrangheta" and the conversation seems to be applied to the unjustified condition of prisoners. They seem to distrust in the staff's good faith letting leak out their worry about the researchers' presunptive interest aimed at revealing the reasons of their detention. Yet the leader, having a partially deparanoying effect, and indeed coherently with the research purposes, underlines that the "facts" concern more the judicial ambits, where as the psychological view concerns mainly the awareness of experiences, representations, thoughts and emotions related to criminality.

In front of the explicit exhortation to refer emotions and experiences surfaces the prisoners mistrust towards magistracy, hardly discredited as regards the accomplishment of its function.

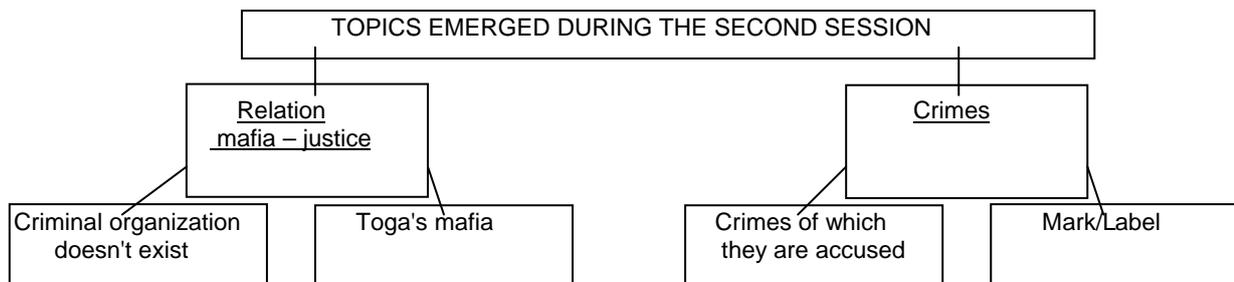
Quickly, statements become extreme: the italian law condemn them for a crime which not only they did not commit, mafia association, but it also doesn't have a correspondent in reality because 'Ndrangheta does not exist. The participants suggest to inquire into the official law divisions to know more about mafia, as if they kindly elude the role of privileged witnesses of the knowledge about 'Ndrangheta and they individuate the judges as the expert. According to the declarations expressed in group by the prisoners, the only information they have about the mafia phenomenon

regards facts read on newspapers and books. Not only the fallacy of the accusation is sought obsessively, but even the disjunction from mafia phenomenon is reiterated with such stubbornness that it makes the cognitive-affective centring on this topic transpire.

A stringent logic, paralyzing from a verbal point of view, so that it doesn't leave space to other argumentations, but which contradicts itself when a participant let escape that “who is really inside will never talk about the organization because of the hard tie of secretness”. It's a huge mistake considering the effort made to show that calabrian mafia is a legend. This will be one of the very few small openings, one of the imperceptible psychological oversights about the thesis, strongly proclaimed, of they disjunction from 'Ndrangheta, distraction which seems to be connected to the attitude of vague disapproval towards collaborators of justice. On this topic phrases break roughly, the subject changes quickly, shifting the focus from collaborators of justice to women, as if there could be any sort of unconscious relation between the two categories. And actually it seems so, as it is emphasized, among all the possible characteristics, the mafia women's reticency, almost against the superficiality and the verbal imprudence of some collaborators of justice.

The calabrian woman is compared to the sicilian woman, for both of them is underlined the great virtue of discretion, kept with undeformability even in the case of a direct management of criminal activities. Degradation of values exquisitely calabrian, for the members of the group, seems to be the present lack of respect for women, once untouchable, whilst now “They often become target to hit somebody else”.

*Pic. 2 – Map – second group session in prisoners*



From picture two comes out with ulterior clearness and expressive strength the topic of the inexistence of calabrian criminal organization: a proper real 'Ndrangheta's ontological denial.

The group opens the session interrogating itself about “what is intended for mafia” and it seems to be a heavy label constructed by the justice to “accuse poor innocents”.

The only real mafia recognized by the participants is “toga's mafia”. The prisoners complain about the senselessness of their conviction and of the punitive measures taken against them considered excessive in comparison to heavier crime as murder which on the contrary “is treated as a common crime and so is expiated in medium security, whereas innocents are enclosed in high security and branded for life”.

Many of the present prisoners are accused of having run 'Ndrangheta's traffic of drugs nationally and internationally but exactly the crime of drug dealing is defined by the members of the group “useless” because “it doesn't exist at big circuits”, as well as organized criminality doesn't exist. All the participants effort seems to be tended to mine at bases the accusations that took to their arrest.

Speculations about the international drug traffic show an attempt to conceal and banalize what in reality is, according to the inquiries, the most important source of gain and of illicit of calabrian mafia.

The denier rabidness at times leaves place to a depressive worry about future. In particular, the prisoners' concern is related to the world out prison, as, according to their declaration, the mafia association crime remains branded on them even after they have expiated their penalty, with the consequent decapitation of each existential, social and working possibility once they become free again. The fear of social judgement doesn't concern imprisonment itself: what frightens, infact, it is not having had problems with law, but the crime they are charged with. What turns out inconceivable and unbearable is to be considered members of mafia.

The interesting aspect, from a psychological point of view, is the simil-paranoid syntax that the

prisoners use to describe their victims condition, martyrs for a big deceit, which coincide with the construction of a mysterious criminal association to divert attention from the official power's machinations. In this way the prisoners drag the staff in a upside down world, where the faces of good and bad ones, of judged and judges, of who administrates law and who infringe it are inverted. A feeling of unreality, of mystification, of bewilderment pervades the group. It's an atmosphere which reminds the counteractive experience, dear to each mental health operator, experimented in front of a systematized delirium of persecutory background. The 'Ndranghetist psychology seems to make use of this confusing game between fantasy and reality, between the doubtful existence of calabrian mafia and the genuine image of the inhabitants of this region, who work honestly and don't long for power and wealth.

It's a much different attitude from the the worrying and sharp arrogance of men of Cosa Nostra, who essentially perceive themselves as elected, as privileged, capable to dialogue with the world only from this ideological positions towards themselves. Inside Cosa Nostra, shut in its psychoanthropological self referentiality, there is no criminal deviance because the followed life style is perfectly integrated with the original environment, scientifically calibrated on immanent deontological axes. In this way there are no victims, nor executioners. The only watershed that allows to categorize events is the organizational truth, Cosa Nostra's truth. The calabrian prisoners, instead, define themselves as persecuted, unfairly accused and even if they deny it in every way, during this second session, they talk about mafia, they push it back in the myth, but they constantly mention it.

From a strictly groupanalytic subjectual vertex, in front of the Sicilian men of honour is experimented the feeling of being in front of the overwhelming and saturating power of the criminal organization, in front of the 'Ndrangheta men, instead, you notice something invisible like the other face of the moon, something that is in a far away elsewhere, present but hidden, perhaps just in the subsoil of globalization. The members near to Cosa Nostra, as it surfaces from recent researches (Coppola et al, 2008; Giordano et al. 2008), cause in their therapist countertransfert reactions of impotence and of overwhelming. This seems to be attributable to the thickness of the transpersonal matrix that organizes these patients' mind. The 'Ndrangheta members, on the contrary, defend their invisibility and show a psychic matrix maybe less marked with the anthropological Us but submitted to an internal coercion of ransom and revenge that is thematized on the utopic attempt to upset the story through a colonialistic tissue, woven in great secret. The imperative seems to be : reproduce and spread in other places and flatten, shy as more as possible in Calabria.

It is not certainly a chance that calabrian mafia is more visible on the North and abroad than what it is in its territory. Such phenomenology has clearly to do with psychoanthropological aspects. To the calabrians, in fact, much more than to the Sicilians, their own country seems sterile and hopeless: there is no choice other than emigration ( Arlacchi, 2007).

The emancipation coincide with the journey, industry can find a place only in some elsewhere. Calabria is the eternally hanging place of return, stagnant like its streams, unfertile like its marshes. The familiar place where one day, once repatriated, it will be possible to enjoy with the dear relatives fruits collected in far away harvests.

From such outlined picture originate numerous questions. First of all, what kind of relation twists the 'Ndrangheta with a society perceived in this way? How does the devaluation of its own territory's potentialities act on the 'Ndrangheta's psyche? Is family perhaps the only context considered livable? And by consequence, which can be the psychology and the psychodynamic quality of the relation between "I" and "Us" in the Ndrangheta family world? If Cosa Nostra operated a reproduction of the family matrix on a social group external to the blood ties to build its cells, in Calabria this cloning effort was not necessary the origin family coincides with the criminal membership. This could mean that whereas in Cosa Nostra there was the need to spread out the mafia organism in the social, contaminating and transmuting interpersonal relationships in subjecting transpersonal relationships, in the 'Ndrangheta there doesn't seem to be the need to phagocytate the society in the mafia world, as if the members nourish an ideal of sufficiency of the biological family and the social, the near one as much as the far away one, extraregional, simply represent a background of action.

The groupanalytic studies on Sicilian mafia (Lo Verso, 1998; 1999; 2002; Giorgi et al. 2009) maintain that mafia psychism precludes each critical trial indispensable to the identity structure because in the mafia member personologic evolution there is no access to the

dialectic “I- Us” that builds the subjective identity. Can we think, then, that in the ‘Ndrangheta matrix is structured an even more granitic mental fundamentalism, in which the biological and anthropological truth knit together agglutinating a totally asphyxiated transpersonal? Or instead the ‘Ndrangheta’s criminal clearance abroad, its accentuated internationalistic vocation however loosened its psychic saturation, partially subduing the members’ mental dogmatism?

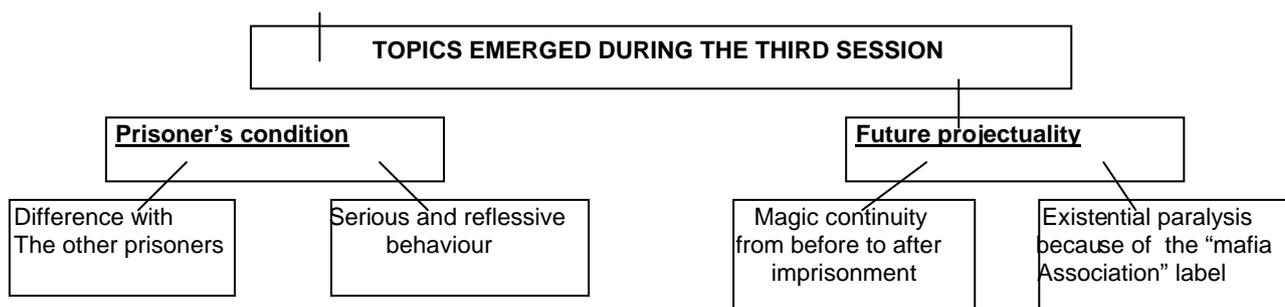
Our studies about this are still very young and they don’t allow us to answer to all these questions. Yet, limiting the analysis to the informations that come out in the prisoners group, we can hypotize that the worry for their own children and their future out of the prison can represent subjective qualities that don’t seem to belong to a fundamentalist “I”

Clearly the subjective (and not subjectual) ideation results mixed with aspects of psychic rigidity, that can already be noticed in the mental perseveration with which are handled the topics of the discussion.

Even the etymology of the term ‘Ndrangheta, from the greek “brave man”, seems to preserve in the lemma humanity aspects that fade out in the name of Sicilian mafia, Cosa Nostra, swollen up by the surplus of the organization’s appropriative and “thing-reduce-to” power.

So, in the ‘Ndrangheta psychism, the embitterment of the family model could not be due to a more marked psychic saturation, but to an elevation to a romantic ideal of the family model. Whereas the psychic structure of Cosa Nostra seems ideological, the ‘Ndrangheta one seems to be crossed by an idealistic vein: the dream of expansion, the idealization of family power, the open face fight against magistracy, the pretention to revise the condemn, are a clear example.

Pic. 3 – Map – third group session in prison



During this third and last session appears evident the recursive of the argumentations discussed by the group. There seems to be a kind of prevalent ideation in that pushes to bend each remark of the leader and take it to the discriminatory power of mafia association crime. It's discussed how much the own life story can have been inherited and the fear of generational transmission of the condemn, that could engrave on the own children's life: “the prejudices are inherited”.

Attentive are the examination of the methodology that uses a ruthless magistracy that pronounces sentences so called “cascade or trawl”, showing off an excessive discretionary in issuing verdicts. The relation with the State is strongly conflictual, the strong opposition to the legitimized power is verbalized by the feeling of shame for the judicial system's conduct, a experience that they causally connect to the ethnic belonging, progressively extending it to the being calabrians, italians and even europeans. It is surprising how even in the protest appears an internationalistic drift, founding in a single amalgam the regional, national and continental belonging. Psychologically you could hypothesize that boundaries and belongings are not internally clear or that they are hallucinated and shattered by an idea of control and of power on a global scale. In other words, it seems as the members of 'Ndrangheta don't even have clear who and where they are. Do they move abroad or in Italy? Are they visible or invisible? Are they criminals o pioneering explorers of the world? The sensation of evanescence, of ineffability caused in the society by 'Ndrangheta is traced in a perfectly specular way in the group members' internal world, who appear decontextualized, internally darkened, tending to a magic thinking.

The emotional and verbal asperity addressed to the judicial institution rotates around the topic of the unfounded accusations which compel to imprisonment, contested diplomatically and with psychological wit, showing the evident scrape between their condition of prisoners and serene as

well as incorruptible behaviour. Their representation is to be “well educated, healthy, serious, and resist hard”.

The participants show much confidence inside the prison house. In fact their protest does not strictly regard the jail which instead they live, perhaps by means of denying strategies, as it is whichever institution. The question that animates them is more paradoxical and radical and all aimed at prove their innocence and the absurdity of the sentence: they are respectable men surely not delinquents.

Not by chance, they present themselves to the convocation of the group sessions groomed, well-dressed, careful in their ways and motions. Its like if they are attending one of them meetings that daily-life phrasing arranges in the bars, in the squares, in the political circles. As if they where not in a total institution.

In this frame of parodying normalization of the context there's wide space for planning pushes, for dreams, for human and affective needs: work, family and children have the priority in their desires. The world outside appears vivid and extremely near, without padlocks, bars, and boundary walls.

The prison achieves an irrational parenthesis and the activities, the competences, the commitments left on the step of the prison house, can be resumed where they stopped. An alarming incantation is felt which cures the experiential fractures inflicted by detention and hesitates in a lived experience of incredible existential continuity (Napolitani, 1987). Only the burden of Mafia association seems to wake up the consciences of incantation and strongly paralyze future expectations. When the group comes back on this topic, the experience seems to leave the appearance of dream and takes shape in the participants' emotional liveliness, in the combative and polemical spirit as regards to a condemn which must be reconsidered, reopened and rewritten. They don't show themselves resigned to judgement expressed by the gowns at all. They're all angry, but no one of them is desperate. With this halo of perky irreverence the last group is closed, leaving in the equipe a creeping feeling of mystery: perhaps exist mechanisms, dark stratagems, psychological inversion which escape our gaze, for which condemnations and the sentences issued don't have definitional nature.

#### *Derealization and deterritorialization: the invisible mafia*

Through the sessions realized in the prison and some interviews done with the Prison house operators emerged important elements which concur to delineate the psychic matrix of the members of 'Ndrangheta and which concern psychological modalities derealizing and related to magical thinking.

Borrowing from the psychiatric nosography the term derealization, if we would leave out of consideration the reasons for which it is used, would be an epistemological mistake as the prisoners don't present psychopathological phenomemologies of dissociative kind and on the other hand the intervention the work equipe meant to implement did not have psycho-diagnostic but research purpose. However we use this term, emptying its psychopathological properties, to strongly underline the context de-connotation pursued by the prisoners which caused intense unreality and disorientation experiences.

The first derealizing aspect regards the way prisoners present themselves to the group: all perfumed, clean, and combed. A picture totally contrary to the place where they are.

The prison doesn't seem to be experienced from the members of the group with the existential prostration of who is bereft of freedom, with the desperation for immobility and alienation from the world. Most of the people would have huge difficulties to pass their life in a cell. The prisoners show such serenity and ease on moving inside the institution, that they dress up when they are called for an appointment. They don't look like the prisoners, but like the guardians and the masters of the place where they live.

The decontextualization is visualized in a even more sharp way in the prisoners' excellent behaviour inside the prison and inside the groups: they are, in fact, extremely diligent. They don't create problems, they solve them. Even during the groups, except the first session, they show themselves as perfect orchestrants of the process and rules: they keep the time, decide who has to talk and when. They all have to wait for their turn and not interrupt the others. It is possible to hypothize that this extreme control is due to the will of being laudable men even in prison, boycotting in this way this structure and upsetting the stigmatizing considerations related to their

condition. You could talk, following a psychodynamic vertex, of a magic ideation to which subtends the retroactive annulment mechanism: if you are an exemplary prisoner, there's no need for control and restraint, so even the prisoner's identity is annulled. The self-control invalidates the hetero – control.

The annulment and the omnipotent control are unconscious mechanisms that psychodynamically regard the obsessive or psychopathic spectrum. In these personological dimensions the mind spends all its energy to control the external world, slipping into behaviours often strange and that can damage the other people. The feeling of being able to affect the world and produce effects on others, with the own behaviour, seems to be connected to a critical dimension of esteem (Mc Williams, 1999). From our studies on the mafia mind surfaces, apart from appearances, a radical lack of self - esteem, recognizable in the fact that the member of mafia feels he is somebody just because he is member of the organization, whereas as a singular individual he does not exist, he does not have any social and existential thickness (Lo Verso, 1998). In the case of the members of the group the use of these mechanisms could plausibly derive from the need to survive in the prison context and to balance the contradiction between the self – representation as men of honour and the social connotation as delinquents. Restoring in the prison a normative order of which they are the keepers, it is possible to re-create the conditions for the survival of a identity system centred on power and on the preservation of their human dignity. At the same time, the annulment gets activated to avoid unbearable feelings of shame (McWilliams, 1999). The same shame that the prisoners express regarding to the crime they are accused of. Even though they deny the existence of the mafia association's crime, the emotional activation towards this topic betrays a strong identity worry. The question seems to rotate around a radical conflict: their idea of men of honour is much different from the idea the world gives about it. It's like if in some way this contradiction is perceived and causes such pain as to bother mighty defensive mechanisms. Whereas in the mind of other members of mafia, as the members of Cosa Nostra, there's no doubt, no internal conflict, no contradiction, in the members of the group there seems to be revealed a greater awareness of the dyscrasia between the world inside the organization and the one outside of it. And perhaps just for such reason, the organizational system is defended to the death, recreating it in prison, annulling the context, fixing rules which can preserve the group members' respectability, from where it comes, in example, the rule, issued by the group leader of the 'ndrangheta prisoners, which prescribes to all the prisoners to wear underwear when they take showers and to use the wardrobe's door as separè to change their clothes. The homophobic anguish is such to require the establishment of rigorous rules of cohabitation to baffle the risk that impulses, weaknesses, fantasies corrupt the soul of the men of honour.

Really, anthropologically, the promulgation of iron regulations of conduct inside the communities originates from the realistic and fulfilledness of deviance which the rule wants to admonish.

The homosexual intercourse is to the prisoners likely so unbearable as much as possible and this would mean that psychic strictness doesn't reach to the level of libido's annihilation as it's traditionally noticed in Cosa Nostra, where homosexual conduct is not only unaccepted but is also internally inconceivable. It is known, in fact, that sexuality, even the etherosexual one in the world of Cosa Nostra is not very significant.

The control, as a kind of scientific monitoring of behaviour, re-propose itself when the group's order and the assignation of the seatings has to be determined as well: no one takes the seating near the woman observer. Respect towards women is very present and comes out many times during the sessions, which shows the extreme faithfulness of these men to the traditional moral codes.

The mental perseveration of the members of the group is evicted by the obstinate and transversal recurring of the justice's topic during all the sessions. The magistracy is discredited and accused of corruption. According to the prisoners it is necessary to investigate in this field to know more about it, as "right there is the crime". Of which criminal organization they are accusing them? It is only an imaginary ideation to embed poor innocents. It's strange how this leit motiv returns in many ways and levels of power.

Yet, this thesis seems to be invalidated by some contradictory elements: 'Ndrangheta is an invention, but the Capobastone exist. The only cognitions are the ones relative to facts read on the newspaper and seen on television, but it comes out that "who is really inside it will never speak of the organization because of the strong tie of secretness".

But the contradictory is immediately subsided and put to silence, rapidly alternating with manifestations of psychic strictness. Strict are the codes to which it is necessary to hold on, the

behaviours which have to be accomplished. A rigorous control that belongs partially to those who operate in the Prison House too.

It is obvious that, being a restraining and coercive structure, the neatness of boundaries, rules, the prudent management of distances are aspects ingrained to the institution's vocation and social function. Yet, there seems to be from some operators a cognitive care not to acknowledge the entity of the crime committed by the prisoners as if they want to avoid knowing. As if, covering, on the identification card, the insert that describes the crime of which that person dirtied his hands, he would have committed it less or not at all. Control, denial, magic thinking, compartmentalization, they seem to be mechanisms necessary to the maintenance of an adequate abearance even from the operators. We wonder if this has to do only with the prison context or if it can be a psychoanthropological connotation which calabrian mafia uses, in particular if we keep in mind the mystificatory phenomenology and the culture of invisibility that 'Ndrangheta managed to knit in Calabria.

Everything in this land seems to be hidden, submerged, magically annulled.

Avoiding to incur simple generalizations, it is possible to suppose that there is a connection of anthropological nature between the family based organization of 'Ndrangheta, its relation with the society, and the psychological process of annulment and of magic thinking. The lack or the weakness of a tie with the society, recognized by the faction, fogged its configuration, covered its traces, creating a halo effect which allowed it to weave in silence international businesses. Moreover this could have compromise the territorial recognition and the social prestige which, instead Cosa Nostra still enjoys today in some contexts. The sicilian mafia is present on the territory, uses scientifically and instrumentalizes ruthlessly the anthropological sediments of its culture, connecting itself consciously and unconsciously with the society's ganglions. The 'Ndrangheta seems invisible in its internal world as much as in the external one and for this same reason is little opposed. In Sicily speaking of mafia was started long ago. Not in Calabria. In Sicily, there's always been an anti-mafia vocation, which in many occasions proved itself decisive in the fight against the organization. In Calabria region the anti-mafia is a recent phenomenon which is just now starting let hear its echo. We don't want to refer here exclusively to the anti-mafia unmanned by the institutions, but also to a cultural rebellion by hand of the citizens. In Calabria, precisely, seems to be diffused an attitude of passive and silence cohabitation. Probably it's exactly because of the extreme pervasiveness and of the dark alliance Cosa Nostra interweaved with the territory that in Sicily exists a long course anti-mafia movement. The social contamination by the sicilian coterie represents, infact, simultaneously an element of huge power and of extreme vulnerability, as exposition implicates visibility, which, in the sicilian case, traduced itself in connivance and commixture at certain levels, and in awareness, disdain, indignation and social action at other levels. For this reason Cosa Nostra in Sicily is much powerful but also much hated and battled. In Calabria the situation seems to be different and the criminal phenomenology of the 'Ndrangheta can help to comprehend such difference: the calabrian mafia is much powerful out of Italy, invisible and silent in its region, structure on family cells which depredate the society while keeping it at a distance. Let's assume the structural and psychological centrality of family, in the calabrian mafia, inevitably has consequences on the psychism of co-opted. From a groupanalytical point of view, the family power moves on the register of the imaginary (Napolitani, 1987) repeating ad infinitum a desiring memory anchored to the past, wedged in the dream of matrix eternity. This produces a suspension, an evolutive arrest of the thinking which doesn't meet the real – social and doesn't produce a project. The psychology of the 'ndrine seems to present this oniroid suspension in the family world, here the familistic expectation does not open to the dimension of the unpredictable; it's a temporal deceit, a forward bound which rebounds in the past, in the known, in the autoproving prophecies created by the original matrix which denies the nonmembership and waits fideistically for a messiah already met. The family sacredness is present also in the sicilian mafia but, whilst in the case of this last one, the entangling impact with the society has created a "Us- family" as a way of being-in-the-world which permanently infiltrated itself in the context creating deep unconscious connivances with the communities, in the 'Ndrangheta the merely instrumental meeting with the society build up an "I – family" capable to expand itself reaching incommensurable extensions, bending, thinning but always having to return to its microscopic original shape. The society didn't thicken the 'Ndrangheta's psychic matrix which, from a psychic-anthropological point of view, seems to remain enclosed in the limited boundaries of the family dimension, trapping the organizational matrix in the dream's enchantment. But the dream, despite

in this case is destined to the paralysis of utopia and then to the idealistic conservation of the family order, reveals relational elements, strong affective and self protecting ties which in the inhumanity of mafia's ideology are generally forcluded.

Cosa Nostra, differently from Camorra and 'Ndrangheta always had a central organ, which incarnates the organization, interprets a thinking that is unique, totalizing, homologating, on which the single individualities flatten, the blood ties fade, loved ones can be killed if they endanger the organization. In Cosa Nostra, the U selevated to a fundamentalist ideology comes before everything else: th organization before the organization chart, the thing before the person.

Perhaps the 'Ndrangheta's psyche, whilst in its brutality, ignominy and cruelty, preserves humanity aspects that the strict organizational closure, on which Cosa Nostra has tightly incardinated, seems to have almost totally set to zero.

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