

# ■ European Conference on Drug-Related Violence

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# THE DIVERSIFICATION OF CRIMINAL MOBILITY

**Changes in recognition, reputation, and the use of  
violence, in intergenerational criminal groups in Europe**

# This talk

- Across Europe, various criminal groups, including mafia-type families, have been successful at exploiting opportunities across generations and places also thanks to their recognition and reputation; some of these groups are particularly active in the trafficking and importation of cocaine and are active in various countries at different lengths.
- Their intergenerational changes (including but not limited to technological challenges) influence their success both in terms of their reputation and their business, as well as impacting on their use or threat of violence.
- In this talk we explore how long standing criminal groups in cocaine trade in Europe (with the example of the 'ndrangheta) experience intergenerational changes, transculturation (the stratification of cultures) and market innovation, for example by using at their encrypted communications in Europol-led operation Eureka and also Operation Pollino (2018).
- This will allow us to reflect on how the use of violence (or the lack of it) relates to their recognition in the underworld, by other criminal groups as well as by law enforcement and their successful investment in reputation-building exercises.

# A bigger picture: Globalisation

## Connection between organised crime and global capitalism

- Adaptation to rapid economic and governance changes.

## Technological advancements as facilitators

- Cybercrime emergence
- Diversification of criminal activities.

## Importance of cultural roots & migration patterns

- Exploiting personal connections and cultural identity.

# Mafia & OC Mobility Studies “revamped”

- Increasing mobility of mafia-type groups (power & profit oriented), which is different than delocalisation of organised criminal activities alone
  - *Transnational organized crime adapting to global dynamics.*
- Importance of transculturation in understanding mobility of mafia-type and sophisticated groups
  - *Cultural stratification and power imbalances in host countries affect the mobility.*
- Focus on the ‘ndrangheta as my primary case study
  - *e.g., insights from Operation Eureka (2023) and Pollino (2018).*

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## Intergenerational and technological changes in mafia-type groups: a transcultural research agenda to study the ‘ndrangheta and its mobility

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# A 'ndrangheta overview

## Definition and historical context

Originating from Calabria, South of Italy, with a complex social and criminal structure.

## Their role in the cocaine trade in Europe (and beyond)

Increasingly hybrid connections, multi-cellular initiatives and partnerships

## Intergenerational crime dynamics

Exploitation of family ties and diaspora connections.

## Impact on local communities

Disruption and labelling of ethnic groups as crime-related.

The 'ndrangheta employs violence residually "at home" - not just as a tool for intimidation but also as a means of establishing control and maintaining power within both their home region and less so abroad. This violence can create a climate of fear that complicates community relations and hampers efforts to combat organised crime.

# The 'ndrangheta abroad as a case study

Analyze transformations in 'ndrangheta dynasties home and abroad	Focus on technological communication across different generations and different markets and its implications.
Operation Pollino (2018) Eureka (2023)	Major international law enforcement operations involving multiple EU states.
Integrate migration studies with mafia mobility research	Understanding transcultural interactions and intergenerational changes.
Understand change	<p>In the way diasporas and families abroad are exploited</p> <p>In the way intergenerational changes in the use of technology change the organization</p> <p>In the way violence is used in activities abroad and at home</p>

# Technological changes in OC

**Role of technology  
in mafia-led  
activities**

Enhanced communication tools for international operations but little impact on structure at home.

**Intergenerational  
changes in  
technology usage**

Younger members embracing innovations, older members showing caution.

**Cybercrime as an  
evolving domain**

New technologies creating both opportunities and risks.

# Transcultural Framework

## Cultural negotiation and adaptation

- Understanding how cultures interact and influence each other.

## Importance of power dynamics in transculturation\*

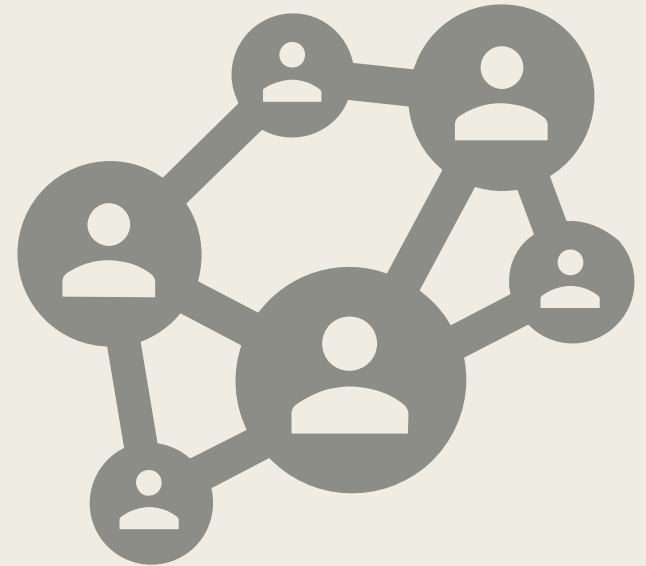
- Examining how cultures resist or adapt to marginalization.

## Relevance to organised crime studies

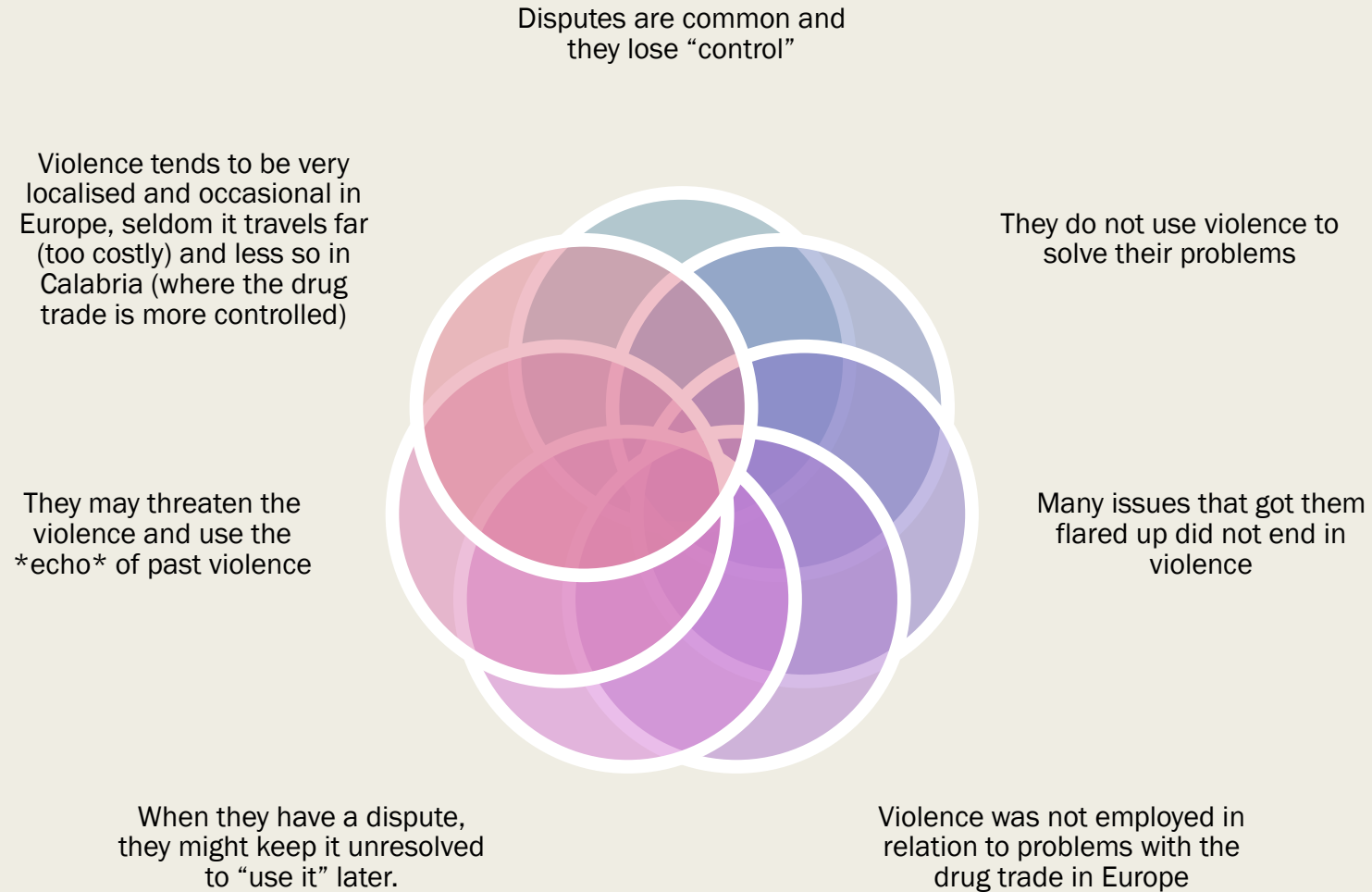
- Addressing the complexities of migration, crime, and culture to understand change.

# Understanding mafias under a transcultural approach

- Maintaining tradition while embracing innovation
  - *For example - Investigate how 'ndrangheta manages cultural rigidity alongside technological advancements.*
- Global and local dynamics influencing behaviour
  - *Explore how transculturation shapes group interactions and activities.*
- Informality and power struggles within mafia structures
  - *Analyse the impact of informal processes on identity and authenticity.*



# Violence use by 'ndrangheta clans in the drug trade



# Implications for use of violence and the echo of violence cross-border

- Understanding violence as resilience tool of mafia groups
  - *Cultural transformations affecting their operations and behaviours abroad but mostly affecting their reputation*
- Examining social capital and trust
  - *Reputation and recognition abroad are built and maintained also on violence and on the **echo of violence**\* back home.*
- Violence is not often manifested abroad but a reference to the **echo of violence** is.
  - *Duisburg killing example as referenced by an alleged 'ndrangheta collaborator via checking online media about San Luca and his family.*
  - *Other example to intimidate German entrepreneur.*
- Potential for broader applications
  - *Insights relevant to other mafia-type organizations and transnational crime.*

# Conclusion

- Violence is anti-economical and anti-rational in drug trade for well established groups
- Well established groups, like mafia-type groups might use violence in selective territories
- The echo of the past violence is part of their reputation and recognition and as such is used for reputational needs through a reference to past violence.
- **Violence is local but the echo of violence might run cross-border and it might substitute the need for violence abroad.**
- New generations use different technology and are culturally different than some of their family members to some extent when they travel.
- They tend to flare up for incidents quicker but also appear tuned in to their recognition and their reputation needs, thus they might never resolve their disputes with violence.
- The tendency to “order” (as opposed to disorder, including violence), which typical of mafia-type settings, seems to be largely respected.



# THE END

Questions?