

# The territorial expansion of mafia-type organized crime. The case of the Italian mafia in Germany

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**Abstract** The present paper deals with the territorial movements of the mafia groups. After postulating that the concept of mafia refers to a form of organized crime with certain specific characteristics of its own, the paper presents: i) a repertory of the mechanisms underlying the processes whereby mafias expand beyond their home territories, and ii) a taxonomy of the forms that the mafia assumes in nontraditional territories. In a case study approach, the conceptual framework thus outlined is applied to the mafia's presence in Germany, as reconstructed from documentary and judicial sources. Though this is an exploratory investigation, certain findings are clear: i) the 'Ndrangheta is more active in Germany than the other traditional Italian mafias (Cosa Nostra and Camorra), and ii), even in "successful" expansions, the mafia does not reproduce the embeddedness it typically shows in its home territories, but chiefly concentrates on infiltrating the economy and dealing on illegal markets.

## Introduction

The spatial mobility of mafia-type criminal organizations has become a topic of growing interest, for scholars as well as for public opinion and law enforcement. For some time now, judicial investigations have indicated that the mafia is no longer confined to certain areas of Southern Italy.<sup>1</sup> In both the scientific literature and the public debate,<sup>2</sup> it is

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<sup>1</sup>The Mafia is traditionally present in several areas of Southern Italy, where it is concentrated in the west of Sicily, with an epicenter in the cities of Palermo and Trapani; in the southern part of Calabria, the province of Reggio Calabria in particular, and in the provinces of Caserta, Napoli and Salerno in the Campania region [19, 29, 52].

<sup>2</sup>See the work of the Antimafia Parliamentary Commission (Commissione Parlamentare Antimafia, CPA), the Antimafia Investigation Bureau (Dipartimento Investigativo Antimafia, DIA) and several recent judicial investigations, e.g., those regarding the mafia's presence in the regions of Piemonte and Lombardia [84, 86]. In addition, starting with Saviano's best-selling book [70], there has been a flurry of publications—mostly journalistic in nature—that have been enormously successful in attracting the public's attention. As for scholarly publications, it should be recalled that the expansion of organized crime was addressed in a special issue of the journal *Global Crime* (3, 2011), with noteworthy discussions of the national and international spread of the Italian mafias [15, 91].

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