IDENTIFYING PATTERNS OF MAFIA MOBILITY: 
THE PRESENCE OF THE ITALIAN MAFIAS IN EUROPE

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Abstract

Research on the spatial mobility of Italian mafias has frequently adopted a narrow approach, focusing on only one type of mafia or a single country. The few studies with a broader perspective do not examine in detail how different mafias operate across different countries. This study addresses these gaps by providing a first comprehensive analysis of the presence of Cosa Nostra, the Camorra and the ‘Ndrangheta across Europe, with the aim of identifying patterns of mafia mobility.

The study combines different data sources and different levels of analysis. Drawing from official reports, it firstly maps the spread of the Italian mafias in Europe and identifies the main characteristics of their presence abroad. Secondly, it focuses on three country case studies and, based on expert interviews, compares how different mafias operate across different countries.

The results show that country-related and activity-related characteristics prevail over organizational ones in determining patterns of mafia mobility. Italian mafias concentrate in a few European countries and in specific areas within a country. Drug trafficking is the most recurrent feature of their presence abroad. The ‘Ndrangheta is the only mafia which has a structured presence in Europe, although it does not reproduce its structures in all foreign countries.