Abstract: This paper discusses the social mechanisms set in motion by a new anti-Mafia organization called Addiopizzo (Goodbye, Pizzo¹) which has been able to successfully encourage a growing number of entrepreneurs and shopkeepers to refuse to pay racket fees to local mobs in the city of Palermo, Italy. By using communication technologies that enable personalized public engagement as part of a new interpretative frame which has brought political consumerism into the repertoire of the anti-Mafia movement, Addiopizzo activists – a group of post-grad students formed in 2004 – have succeeded in creating a range of collective and selective incentives that have made it possible for local businessmen to overcome the problems of collective action and build new social bonds of solidarity. Referring to social movements and diffusion theories, the paper discusses how a relatively small and locally based SMO succeeded in bringing about important changes by organizing itself locally as well as globally, and via Internet. Data for the analysis came from several sources of information, such as interviews with the activists themselves, participant observation, media analysis and a unique dataset reporting the answers given to a structured questionnaire with more than 70 closed questions, distributed in 2011 to 277 entrepreneurs who had joined the mobilization campaign entitled “Change your shopping habits to fight the pizzo” at various points in time.

Keywords: AddioPizzo, Grassroots anti-Mafia, political consumerism, new forms of political participation, individual and collective responsibility.

Francesca FORNO
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Bergamo
email: francesca.forno@unibg.it

¹ Protection racket money.
1. Introduction

[...] They started from Palermo, from people who buy bread and fruit, who bring their cars to the garages, and who go to dinner at restaurants. And they asked them to be on the side of those who do not want to bow down to the oppression of the clan. At the beginning they were only a few hundred, then they became 3,500, and now 7,120 have signed a list of 'support' in solidarity with the others. "Siding with traders is crucial in a city like Palermo; it makes them feel less alone. Those who do not pay the racket money to the Mafia often get into an state in which the damage outweighs the benefits," say the students behind the anti-racket movement. And so the slogan "Change your shopping habits to fight the pizzo" came about.

Choosing to buy products from those who don't pay. But without criminalizing the others, therefore without making a list of the 'bad guys'. After collecting those over 7,000, signatures they started to look for brave traders. For two years, day by day and zone by zone. All the suburbs were excluded for a start, both those to the East and to the West. It is from the centre of Palermo that something is changing. In the living rooms of Via Ruggiero Settimo, in the streets stretching from the Teatro Massimo to the start of Via Libertà [...] (Attilio Bolzoni, Palermo, in La Repubblica, April 27, 2006)

In recent years there has been an evolution in the strategies of social movements. A growing number of associations, groups and organizations have begun to invite citizens to reflect on the social and political significance of their purchases, asking them to make use of their ‘consumer power’ to encourage virtuous production practices, mindful of human rights and the environment. This is what is generally referred to as ‘political consumerism’ (Micheletti 2003).

Political consumerism is not new, neither its negative form known as a 'boycott' and nor in its positive form known as a 'buycott', which were also frequently used by social movements of the past, such as the movement fighting for the abolition of slavery that grew in Europe and America around the turn of the 19th century (Friedman 1999; Micheletti 2009). Positive and negative forms of political consumerism were exploited frequently throughout the nineteenth century, and also in the 20th century by civil society actors as a means by which to oppose companies that treated their employees unfairly, or as a form of opposition to certain governmental choices, like the famous boycott organized against French nuclear testing at Mururoa in 1995 (della Porta & Diani 2006; Forno 2013).

However, the contemporary increase of political consumerism among larger sectors of the population which has been observed in the wake of the shift towards personalized politics among citizens (Bennet 1998; 2013) seems today not only to have built a new transnational awareness across borders to step up pressure on corporations, but also to have facilitated the construction of new alliances among different actors at the local level – shopkeepers, farmers, entrepreneurs, consumer and environmental groups, local public administrations etc. – and that often take the form of alternative production and consumption networks that instead of relying on the logic of maximizing profit, are based on inclusion and collaboration for the ‘common good’ (Forno & Graziano, forthcoming).

Recently, thanks to the action of certain Social Movement Organizations (SMOs), political consumerism has also entered the repertoire of action of the anti-Mafia movement
(Forno & Gunnarson 2010; Partridge 2011; Forno 2011), proving to be a particularly effective strategy since it has also enlisted the participation of certain social actors traditionally reluctant to take collective action against the Mafia, thus allowing the achievement of goals never previously obtained.

Although still poorly analysed empirically, alternative economic practices against the Mafia are quite an interesting phenomenon. Referring to social movements and diffusion theories, the paper looks at Addiopizzo, a relatively new local-based anti-Mafia SMO which by including political consumerism among the practices of the anti-Mafia movement, has succeeded in bringing about major changes in the fight against organized crime in Italy.

The following pages will provide a detailed account on the internal and interactive dynamics that shaped Addiopizzo's mobilization by concentrating on four stages considered as crucial in the process of ‘emergent mobilization’ and the further spread of a movement (McAdam et al. 2001). The four phases are:

(i) Origin of mobilization – which regards the invention, importation and diffusion of a “shared definition concerning the alterations and likely consequences of possible actions undertaken by some political actor” (McAdam et al. 2001, p. 95).

(ii) Strategy identification – during which challengers identify the strategies they judge as potentially effective to reach their goals and frame their claims.

(iii) Creation of a social and organizational base – during which challengers create their organizational vehicle to support mobilization and a collective identity on which it rests.

(iv) Diffusion – which refers to how mobilization is extended from early risers to new actors and groups in the society.

Data for the analysis came from several sources of information, such as interviews with activists themselves, participant observation, media analysis and a unique dataset reporting the answers given to a structured questionnaire with more than 70 closed questions, distributed in 2011 to 277 entrepreneurs who had joined the mobilization campaign entitled ‘change your shopping habits to fight the pizzo’ at various points in time.2

2 The part of this research related to the structured questionnaire distributed among entrepreneurs that joined the Addiopizzo campaign was supported by the Swedish Research Council (2010-2013). This part of the project was a collaboration between Uppsala University (Dr. Carina Gunnarson) and Bergamo University (Dr. Francesca Forno).

2. Forms and strategies of the anti-Mafia movement – from past to present

Social movements are among the main actors through which, historically, communities have given voice to their social and political demands. Movements in various historical periods have been able to bring claims that would then trigger important processes of change to the attention of citizens and governing elites alike. The major reforms that led to the enlargement of the sphere of individual and collective rights in different historical phases were often preceded by waves of mobilization carried out by powerless actors (Fox Piven 2008) who, by organizing and coordinating their actions, opposed an independent power to that of the ruling elites, which proved capable of triggering change processes.

Unlike parties or interest groups, rather than single organizations, these actors are better represented as systems of non-formalized relationships between a plurality of individuals, groups and organizations. As often underlined, these networks allow for the circulation of resources (information, expertise, material resources) that are fundamental for
collective action and for the development of shared interpretational frames, as well as providing the preconditions for the development of mobilization and for practising specific lifestyles at the same time (della Porta & Diani 2006).

The characteristics of these networks may vary from loosely connected to dense and highly integrated. The action of social movements may also appear transitory or long-lasting, and may take a violent or non-violent form. All these characteristics heavily depend on the social context in which the movements are formed, the objectives they pursue and the repertoire of actions adopted within a form of participation carried out mostly outside the traditional channels of ‘interest mediation’ (such as political parties for example).

In this regard, it has often been observed that social movements tend to emerge and spread in situations where the political, economic and social opportunities – also called ‘system of opportunities’ – are neither fully open nor completely closed to their claims. That means that mobilization tends to remain confined within small groups of activists when the instances "from below" are or immediately implemented and channelled through traditional interest mediation channels, or when collective action fails to gain support from powerful allies (Kriesi et al. 1995).

The degree of opening and closing of the opportunities systems towards the instances put forward by social movements is also important with regards to the tactics of action ("repertoire of action") utilized by these actors. When looking at the history of social movements, for example, it is possible to recognize some historical periods during which social movements have directly opposed to the dominant power and organization of power by proposing and supporting forms of self-organization (Forno & Graziano, forthcoming).

Over the years, the anti-Mafia movement – the plurality of individuals, groups and organizations fighting against the Mafia and for a system of political power different from that which created and sustained the Mafia (Santino 2009) – has also taken on different forms and used different strategies of action and organization. Throughout the 19th century, the Mafia was a specific aspect of the class struggle and the struggle for democracy in Sicily. The history of social struggles against the Mafia starts with the Fasci Siciliani,\(^3\) and continued right up to the 1950s with the peasant movement. The social struggles of that period concerned the area of Western Sicily in particular (where the Mafia historically originated and developed), gathering support from the wide-felt discontent among the lower classes, the losers in the power division between the mafiosi and the landowners, which led to various assassinations and massacres. While the parable of the Fasci Siciliani ran out of steam in a few years (essentially 1891-1894), the peasant movement continued its fight throughout the first half of the 20\(^{th}\) century, setting up various Mafia resistance initiatives: protests, demonstrations and strikes, but also strategic choices aimed at eliminating the role of the social-entrepreneurial Mafia such through ‘collective leaseholds’ and co-operative land settlements.

Throughout the 20\(^{th}\) century, the struggle against the Mafia gradually shed its class struggle connotations. The change both in the protest base and in society at large led not only to a reduction in the numbers of people mobilized, but also to changes in the action strategies of the anti-Mafia movement. Between the ‘50s and ‘70s, the key experiences in the anti-Mafia

---

\(^3\) The Fasci Siciliani were primitive trade unions of Sicilian workers and peasants in the early 1890s who sought better labour contracts and protection of villagers’ lands. The Fasci were founded on socialist ideologies, but their lure was mostly practical. They obtained the allegiance of the people by challenging the low wages of the working class and the dominance of agriculture by large landed estates.
movement were ‘individual’ initiatives, such as those of Danilo Dolci4 in Partinico during the ‘50s and ‘60s, or Giuseppe Impastato5 in Cinisi in the ‘70s. In these experiences, although direct forms of action against the Mafia maintained a certain relevance, contentious actions were complemented with other tactics such as of the use of ‘group conversation’ as a means of reflection and self-discovery. In his fight against the Mafia, Dolci made also use of several peasant movement practices of the past such as the ‘inverse strike’ (working for the community during strike days). The experience of Impastato also featured the use of both direct and indirect tactics. Through ‘Radio Aut’,6 Impastato streamed information and complaints, as well as engaging in the organization of struggles against those who, at the time, were expropriating peasant lands for the construction of a new airport at Punta Raisi.

The Mafia violence that characterized the ‘80s and ‘90s7 had the effect of triggering a strong reaction both among citizens and political actors. Mainly but not only in the city of Palermo, this period was marked by the rise of a plethora of new associations and initiatives. The mobilization against the Mafia in these years extended once more to a large number of people. In Palermo, where the social reaction to the assassination of the two judges Falcone and Borsellino8 was particularly strong, this was a period in which the institutions managed to regain some credibility in the eyes of citizens, thanks to the figure of Leoluca Orlando, re-elected mayor of Palermo in 1993 with over 75% of the votes. Police intervention also recorded a peak of activity in these years. Around the early ‘90s, the number of Mafia bosses and Mafia affiliates arrested was remarkable, both in Sicily an outside the island.

However, also as a result of this success, the drive towards greater civil mobilization quickly lost steam. Many of the associations founded after the assassination of the two judges dispersed or closed down, and citizens returned to their everyday lives. As had already happened in earlier periods, the anti-Mafia movement in Palermo came to a halt once again at the end of the 90s and began to break up, hindered also by internal conflicts that curtailed its ‘political potential’.

In Palermo and in Sicily as a whole, the new century saw the end of the period that had become known as the ‘Palermo Spring’. The more recent history, up to the changes that have taken place over the last year, was marked by the rise of Forza Italia in the 2001 national election (the famous 61 parliamentary seats out of 61) and by the election in the same year of Diego Cammarata, considered by many to be one of the worst mayors of Palermo’s history.

As often happens with social movements, however, not everything that was created in terms of both organizational and ideational resources was lost at the end of the previous cycle of protest. As stated by Alberto Melucci (1989), movements often pass through periods of visibility followed by moments of ‘latency’ in which SMOs experiment with new cultural models and new codes. In these terms, it may be said that during the ‘90s the anti-Mafia

4 Danilo Dolci (28th June, 1924 – 30th December, 1997) was an Italian social activist known for his opposition to poverty, social exclusion and the Mafia in Sicily. Dolci’s anti-Mafia approach is important as he did not attack the Mafia front on, but he did come up against mafiosi by challenging their monopoly of the water supply with the of the Iato River dam project.
5 Giuseppe (Peppino) Impastato (Cinisi, 5th January, 1948 – Cinisi, 9th May, 1978), was a political activist who opposed the Mafia, which ordered his murder in 1978. He was born in Cinisi, in the province of Palermo, into a Mafia family.
6 Radio Aut was a self-financed radio station which was created in 1976 by Peppino Impastato and via which he exposed the crimes and dealings of the Cinisi mafiosi on a daily basis.
7 The late 1980s and early 1990s were a tumultuous period in Italy. Bribery scandals eventually brought down much of the postwar political class. In Sicily, political corruption was mixed with murder, as the Falcone and Borsellino assassinations were followed by Cosa Nostra’s deadly bombings in Rome, Florence and Milan.
8 Falcone and Borsellino were two Italian anti-Mafia magistrates who were assassinated separately in 1992.
movement entered a phase of internal restructuring. Like in a laboratory, over these years the anti-Mafia movement underwent a period of intense production of new cognitive and motivational frames that laid the bases for the grassroots anti-Mafia remobilization which became visible in the new century, thanks to the action of some new anti-Mafia organizations which introduced political consumerism to the repertoire of anti-Mafia movement.

3. Grassroots anti-Mafia movements and political consumerism: The Addiopizzo case

Critical consumption started to be adopted by anti-Mafia movements following the mobilizations that took place around the turn of the new century, creating a different cultural climate, in which the multinationals, the rules of the market and of global finance are looked upon as the guilty parties in social injustice and growing environmental problems.

Since the late ‘90s, the organizations involved in boycotts and buycotts have become some of the key central players in the Global Justice Movement, participating as co-organizers of important social and protest events from Seattle and Genoa to the Social Forums and peace marches. It is precisely this situation which seems to have facilitated the use of political consumerism, previously the prerogative of specific groups, by larger and more diversified SMOs. After Seattle, alternative forms of consumption in fact began to be promoted by a variety of civic actors, not only by groups that dealt specifically with the promotion of alternative lifestyles and consumption models, but also by environmental organizations, anti-war and anti-Mafia organizations. As noted in the sections below, it is precisely within the GJM that a new generation of activists was formed: ones who identified critical consumption as a potentially effective form also in the fight against the Mafia (Forno & Graziano, forthcoming).

But how was political consumerism introduced in the fight against the Mafia? How and through which means was the initiative organized? How was it diffused?

3.1 Origins of the mobilization

As argued by McAdam, collective action may spring forth from an initial catalyst that may trigger an emergent group to react to new threats or to identify an opportunity for the achievement of the groups’ interests. However, mobilization can also result from a number of interactive conversations through which shared meanings and collective identities are shaped (McAdam 2003). Local friendships and kinship ties (as well as pre-existing mobilizing infrastructures) have proved very important in facilitating the initial stage of new mobilization.

From a series of interviews with activists, as well as from their own reconstruction of the initial phase of mobilization (http://www.addiopizzo.org/nascita.asp#margini), we know that, unlike past anti-Mafia mobilization, Addiopizzo did not emerge as the consequence of a specific external event prompting a reaction, but rather through conversations among a group of friends who met up with a specific project in mind: to open a fair-trade shop in Palermo:

"The original plan was to open a pub in some way different from the others to be found in Palermo. We had two main motivations: we wanted to create a space where we could start our own business based on the marketing of fair-trade products, something that did not exist in Palermo at the time. Besides this, we were interested in creating a place where certain issues could be discussed: from fair trade to the effects of globalization as well as other issues related..."
more to our specific territory. A project that, in our minds, had both a political and an economic aim." (int. 1[a])

As soon as the plan started to take shape, as activists recalled during an interview, a friend outside the group and who had some experience in setting up new businesses, listed the *pizzo* among the various expenses while helping the seven friends to calculate the initial costs of opening a bar. This was a cost that nobody in the group had considered before. As one interviewee said, it was in this moment the discussion about extortion money started:

“This was how we started to think about this problem. From that moment we started to speculate about what we would do if someone came and demanded a pizzo. If we accepted to pay we would sort of become a party to the crime. The call to the whole population came from here.” (int. 1[a])

In the formation of the first core group of activists, local friendship and kinship ties clearly mattered. What appears to have played a rather important role in this case was also the common experience of the initial group of seven friends in groups and organizations that had participated in the Global Justice Movement (GJM).

The core activists’ previous experiences in the GJM was important for two reasons. First, the participation of the seven core members in events and demonstrations after the so-called *Battle of Seattle* reinforced their friendship and kinship ties making it easier to develop a shared identity and a common account and understanding of the situation in Palermo. Moreover, their experiences in the Global Justice Movements made it easier for them to identify a new line of action to change the situation in Palermo.

As often argued, social movement can influence one another both indirectly, altering through their action the opportunity other movement face in future, or directly though shared personal (Meyer & Boutcher, 2007, 83). Once the protest cycles initiated at Seattle declined, in fact, activists either returned to work primarily for their own organizations or filtered into different groups. As this case also shows, regardless what they did, activists brought back to their territory (in this case to Palermo) not only a different view of the world, but also a new arsenal of tactics.

### 3.2 Strategy identification

To be able to mobilize support, challengers utilize strategies that they deem potentially effective to achieve their goals. As argued by Tilly (Tilly 1986; 1995), to be efficient, contentious actions should be at the same time innovative (in order to signal a change to other parties) and familiar (to be understood by others). Movements do also sometimes emulate each other. In order for emulation to take place, activists must ascertain that their issues and identity are somehow similar to those of other movements from which they wish to copy. They must also have grounds to believe that adopting the tactics of others also offers a reasonable chance of providing success for their own cause (Mayer & Boutcher 2007).

When *Addiopizzo* started to mobilize, market-based actions were already well-known among growing strata of the Italian population: mainly the middle classes, the young and better educated. Like in the whole of Western Europe, Italians were also showing their increasing willingness to take part in consumer boycotts and buycotts (Forno & Ceccarini, 2006, Ferrer-Fons 2006).

---

9 Protection racket money.
The rise of the GJM constituted an important opportunity for the diffusion of market-based actions. As far as the diffusion of these practices is concerned, it is clear how the demonstrations that followed Seattle contributed to generate a different cultural climate in which multinationals, the rules of the market and global financing were targeted as the major causes of social injustice and the increase of environmental problems (Forno & Ceccarini, 2006; Forno, 2007).

The success of political consumerism in spurring civic mobilization and social change seems to have encouraged Addiopizzo activists to emulate groups and organizations that used the market as a political arena. Addiopizzo thus incorporated market-based actions among its tactics to fight organized crime. As one of our informants noted:

“To us, who had taken part in the Global Justice Movement, the idea of applying market-based actions to the problems of our territory, Palermo and the Mafia was sort of a natural thing to do.” (int. 1[b])

The very first initiative through which Addiopizzo went public was a sticker attack. Waking up on 29th June 2004, the citizens of Palermo found hundreds of small stickers all around the historical city centre that read: “A whole population that pays the pizzo is a population without dignity,” thus a message that did not refer to any particular group or person, but which was addressed to all Palermitan citizens.

Although being a rather traditional and common form of action, what seems to have made this initial activity important was the choice of activists to use a personal action frame (Bennett & Segerberg 2011, Bennett 2013) that by lowering the barriers to identification, clearly easier the message to be reported favourably by media and journalists. In fact, the day after, almost all local radio and TV stations commented on the stickers in their daily news editions. Media attention was so high that it even surprised the activists themselves.

Just a couple of days later, on 1st July, the ‘attachini’ (billstickers) explained their motivation in an interview in the regional newspaper Il Giornale di Sicilia and in an open letter published on the same day in the Palermitan edition of la Repubblica. Both in the interview and the open letter, the message conveyed was clear: everyone is accountable for the mechanisms that uphold the practice of paying protection money. Addiopizzo pointed at the indirect effects of simple everyday actions and asked Palermitan citizens to make use of their ‘purchasing power’ as a way of opposing to the Mafia’s territorial stronghold.

“Have we ever stopped to think that while doing our daily shopping we are also giving money to the Mafia? Certainly not, yet this is what we do. If the bakeries, the tobacconists, the bars, the fish markets, the cinemas, the toy stores, etc. where we do our shopping are forced to pay the pizzo, part of the money is given to the Mafia. And even if it’s a small percentage, it’s our money […].” (Extract of the letter published on the Palermitian section of La Repubblica, July 1, 2004)

From that point on Addiopizzo worked to create the conditions for the emergence of new alliances between conscious consumers and resisting local shopkeepers and entrepreneurs. In order to achieve this task, Addiopizzo activists imported and modelled their actions on those of contemporary social movements working “in and thorough the market” as a way of promoting social change (Micheletti 2003; Micheletti 2009; Schurman, 2004; Wahlstrom & Peterson, 2006). In this sense Addiopizzo resembles those “heterogeneous mobilizations in which diverse causes such as economic justice (fair trade, inequality, and development), environmental protection, and war and peace are directed at moving targets
from local to national and transnational, and from government to business,” (Bennett 2013: 21), highlighting a shift towards more personalized engagement and politics also in the anti-Mafia fight.

### 3.3 Creation of a social organizational base

In order for mobilization to take hold and spread, challengers had to create an organizational vehicle and a supporting collective identity. As McAdam (2003) argues, challenging groups may get organized in a completely new way or rely on a pre-existing organization and the routine collective identity on which it rests. The contentious nature of Addiopizzo, its innovative strategy of action and frame, clearly called for the constitution of an original organizational infrastructure.

Setting up a totally new organization required quite a lot of commitment and effort on behalf of the initial core group of activists. While the initial action helped to attract quite a lot of media attention, activists also proved quite skilful in their use of both old and new media. The initial sticker activity proved important for two reasons: to raise citizens’ awareness of extortion practices and to attract new members.

Together with the stickers, the ‘attacchini’ left an email address that served as a sort of funnel to bring together like-minded people. The role of the internet was important, although the organization never relied on new communication channels alone.

As one informant told during an interview:

“Through this email address, as well as through the personal contact each of us had, being a member of other organizations, we were quickly able to reach and involve other people.” (int. 1[a])

The first who joined the organization were mainly members of other groups or people with a well-defined social profile. In the initial stage of the mobilization, university students played quite a central role, confirming how mobilization – at least initially – is channelled through pre-existing social networks through which people might share their own stories and concerns. However, the use of new channels of communication (at first represented by a simple email address written on a leaflet) also enabled activists to connect with people outside their own social networks.

The sticker activity went on throughout the first few months and was even intensified with the opening of the website. Here, posters and stickers were in fact made available for anyone to download. Addiopizzo’s website – which went online on 29th August 2004, the day of the anniversary of Libero Grassi’s assassination10 – soon became a venue for generating new contacts as well as a ‘space’ for discussions and thrashing out issues of common concern.

The campaign entitled “contro il pizzo cambia i consumi” (change your shopping habits to fight the pizzo) was launched few months later. In only few weeks, Addiopizzo activists were able to collect 3,500 signatures from among citizens/consumers who declared to be willing to support with their daily shopping shopkeepers refusing to pay the racket. The list of conscious consumers against the racket was integrally published by the Giornale di Sicilia in May 2005. During the same month the group formally registered as a committee.

In the second year of activity, Addiopizzo started to elaborate strategies that did not only include consumers, but that gradually involved other key actors such as shopkeepers and

---

10 Libero Grassi was an Italian clothing manufacturer from Palermo, Sicily, who was killed by the Mafia on 29th August 1991 after taking a solitary stand against their extortion demands.
entrepreneurs/professionals. Among the diverse tactics deployed by Addiopizzo, of particular importance was the development of the ‘Addiopizzo guide for the critical consumer’. The guide, which is available both from the organization website and as printed copies distributed free of charge to tourists and Palermitians alike, consists in a map of Palermo where all shopkeepers and entrepreneurs who joined the campaign ‘change your shopping habits to fight the pizzo’ are listed. As it will be argued below, this tool have proved to be particularly important also to favour mutual recognition among entrepreneurs refusing to pay protection money. The list was first presented during the first ‘pizzo-free party’ in 2006. The party was held in Piazza Magione in the popular Kalsa quarter, where both Falcone and Borsellino were born. This yearly event involves hundreds of people, mostly young, and takes place every year at the beginning of May.

Over the years, Addiopizzo’s activity further diversified. Besides the ‘pizzo-free party’, another important event is the meeting among retailers and industrials organized each August on the anniversary of Libero Grassi’s assassination. Of great significance is also the activity that Addiopizzo carries out with schools. Moreover, on 4th March 2008, a shop called ‘punto pizzo free’ was opened in one of the most touristic areas of Palermo. The shop is entirely dedicated to the sale of pizzo-free products.

Addiopizzo members also periodically engage in the organization of various activities in support of resisting shopkeepers. They also take part in events organized by other organizations. Addiopizzo has promoted actions with schools as well as with other anti-Mafia organizations such as the Centro Peppino Impastato (the Sicilian Centre of Mafia Documentation, founded in 1977 by the historian Umberto Santino), Libera (an association established in 1995 which deals with civic education and the social use of real estate confiscated from the Mafia) as well as with some more recent actors, such as the Palermitan branch of the Banca Etica, which opened in November 2007. Collaboration between these actors was often facilitated by the number of shared members and the number of joint activities and events.

Apart from these organizations, Addiopizzo has been also able to establish links and coalitions with other actors not traditionally involved in anti-Mafia mobilization. For example, the collaboration with Adiconsum – one of the largest Italian consumer organizations – has been important in Addiopizzo’s activity. In 2006 Adiconsum sponsored one of the first Addiopizzo campaigns entitled ‘I pay those who don’t pay’ (‘pago chi non paga’), a campaign that had the support of several other consumer associations such as Lega Consumatori, Adoc, Aduc, Sicilia Consumatori and the Unione Nazionale Consumatori.

Its non-partisan and pragmatic character, the presence of a collective leadership, flexible structures as well as the reliance on collective decision making are all characteristics of Addiopizzo that – while differentiating the initiative from previous experiences in the fight against the Mafia – highlight similarities between Addiopizzo and many of the large-scale examples of individualized collective action (Micheletti 2003) such as those carried out by contemporary social movements such as Occupy or the Indiñados, which organize their general assemblies using consensus procedures and a host of direct democracy practices. Like all these contemporary collective efforts, Addiopizzo activists have also displayed openness to individual-level innovation.

Despite its flexible structure, Addiopizzo – which over the years has grown a lot in terms of numbers of active members – is rather formalized. It has a written statute, written programs, defined offices (a president, a spokesman, a chairperson, an administrative committee, an assembly a part-time paid secretary) and an office. The group also enjoys a
certain amount of financial support from different sources: from private donations (through its website), from selling gadgets (t-shirts etc.), and from grants and sponsorships.

### 3.4 Diffusion

As empirical research has pointed out, mobilization is primarily influenced by relational diffusion channels – e.g. movement organizations and social networks – and by news media. Diffusion is also responsible for the mobilization scale shift (McAdam et al., 2001, McAdam, 2003).

As seen above, over the years, Addiopizzo’s mobilization has extended along various lines of action which in several aspects mark a major difference with other anti-Mafia organizations of the past. Moreover, by making the market its privileged arena, and by appealing to citizens in their role as consumers rather than along other lines of distinction, Addiopizzo has been able to fit in with the interests, values and beliefs of groups and organizations that go beyond the traditional anti-Mafia actors in Palermo.

The use of a personal action frame (Bennett & Segerberg 2011, Bennett 2013) that lowered the barriers to identification, as well as the adoption of a new strategy of action clearly helped Addiopizzo’s to gain quite a lot of attention by media and journalists. As Fig. 1 shows, articles on both extortion and anti-extortion recorded a sharp increase after 2004, therefore once Addiopizzo entered the scene.

**Fig. 1: Number of articles published by La Repubblica talking about extortion and anti-extortion between 2001 and 2011**

![Figure 1: Number of articles published by La Repubblica talking about extortion and anti-extortion between 2001 and 2011](image)

Addiopizzo was also quite proactive in keeping the public attention high through ongoing communication and information that also included the use of new communication tools and social media, such as Facebook and Twitter. As already mentioned, from the beginning Addiopizzo combined different technologies and modes of communication: from the low-tech sticker that occupied the urban space to the group’s website which helped the organization to

---

11 The media analysis was carried out using the online archive of La Repubblica searching for the following keywords: ‘pizzo’ ‘racket’ ‘estorsione’ ‘Addiopizzo’. The time frame considered was from January 2001 to December 2011. Articles regarded both the national and Palermo section. The total number of articles found was 566.
gain visibility well beyond the local context. The skilful use of internet tools and web platforms, therefore of dense and highly personalized media networks, clearly helped the organization to reach, inform and coordinate various types of people directly.

As seen before, among the diverse communication tools deployed by the SMO, of particular importance was the development of the ‘Addiopizzo guide for the critical consumer’, a project formulated very soon after the founding of the group. From the activists’ point of view, this tool would help conscientious consumers to adapt their purchasing decisions so as to support shopkeepers and entrepreneurs refusing to pay racket money. The map represented quite an important strategic innovation made by the organization, which proved to be rather important also to favour mutual recognition among entrepreneurs refusing to pay protection money and to facilitate the construction of new alliances among different actors.

Between 2006 and 2011 the number of joiners grew by about 100 units per year, registering a peak in 2011 (Fig.2), when 150 shops associated to Confcommercio, encouraged by their category organization, enrolled.

*Fig. 2: Number of shopkeepers and entrepreneurs joining the campaign ‘change your shopping habits to fight the pizzo’ per year*

![Figure 2: Number of shopkeepers and entrepreneurs joining the campaign ‘change your shopping habits to fight the pizzo’ per year](image)

The location of shops tells a lot about the spread of mobilization. Despite the success of Addiopizzo, the initiative remains in fact mainly confined within the more wealthy and affluent areas of Palermo. As Fig. 3 shows, the distribution of shops that have joined Addiopizzo’s list is unevenly distributed across the Palermitan territory. The majority of shopkeepers and entrepreneurs that joined the campaign are largely concentrated in a certain area, i.e. the wealthiest areas, which are also the most important shopping areas of Palermo: Libertà, Politeama and Tribunali-Castellamare. The areas with few or no pizzo-free shops are instead Brancaccio, Oreto-Stazione, Settecannoli and Altarello, where the socio-economic conditions are much weaker.
Fig. 3: Shopkeepers and entrepreneurs joining the campaign ‘change your shopping habits to fight the pizzo’ at four different times
At the beginning, as one informant said during an interview, shopkeepers and entrepreneurs were contacted through activists’ personal ties among the ones who never paid extortion money: “We started off from those who never paid, people we knew personally” (int. 2). While personal ties between activists and shopkeepers and entrepreneurs indeed played a major role at the beginning, the recruitment mechanisms changed over time, also as a consequence of the shifts that Addiopizzo’s actions carried out as part of its external communication environment.

Through the data collected using a questionnaire with more than 70 closed questions, distributed in 2011 to 277 shopkeepers and entrepreneurs, it is possible to observe how direct network ties and indirect network ties worked over time. As it is possible to see in Fig. 4, the role played directly by activists in the recruitment of shopkeepers and entrepreneurs in the very first stage of the mobilization is confirmed.

Although the percentage of joiners who replied they had been contacted by activists before joining the campaign is high throughout the years, it is higher at the beginning of the process. Almost half of the first group answered that they were contacted by activists. Moreover, while more casual contacts (e.g. work colleagues) don’t seem to have played a significant role over the years, it is interesting to observe that once the Addiopizzo campaign had become known, the number of joiners that contacted the association themselves increased (peaking especially in 2008-2008 and 2009-2010).

Fig. 4: Who were joiners contacted by?

The increasing number of joiners that contacted the organization themselves clearly reflects the growing importance of indirect ties, therefore those ties that are not forged via direct person-to-person contacts.

As we may see in Fig. 5, while among the early joiners information spread mainly via personal ties, in the later phases the media prevailed as the principal mechanism. The mass media can in fact also serve as an indirect channel of diffusion via broadcasting information about a movement or some element thereof (e.g., Walgrave & Manssens 2000; Andrews & Biggs 2006; Givan, Roberts & Soule 2010).
These findings seem to corroborate what scholars of protest diffusion have found in other research. The literature on the protest cycle (Tarrow 1998) has in fact often underlined how the diffusion process is characterized by the activation of different types of actors, which have often been distinguished in four categories: ‘innovators’, ‘early adopters of innovation’, the ‘late adopters’ and the ‘non-adopters’.

Innovators are usually the very first to take action and are usually adventurous and willing to take risks. Thinking about the Addiopizzo case, it should be remembered that the ‘attacchini’, the group of friends who set off the mobilization process, had originally planned to open not a ‘normal’ shop but a fair-trade shop, which means that they had the resources and imagination (i.e. they had the skills and knowledge to import and adapt political consumerism discourse and tactic into the anti-Mafia strategies) to understand that fair trade might have a market even in a city like Palermo. Early risers could, for this reason, became generators of a new interpretative frame which led to personalized public engagement as part of the repertoire of the anti-Mafia movement.

By adopting the innovation (in our case, accepting to join the campaign) early, the first 100 shopkeepers and entrepreneurs that joined the campaign in 2006 helped to legitimize the work of early risers by demonstrating the potential of the campaign to others. Early adopters did not invent new tactics or frames, but they were quick to jump on the bandwagon once they became available.

Late adopters, especially those who joined in 2011, were those who chose to join the campaign once it has become somewhat legitimized. Joining the campaign ‘contro il pizzo cambia i consumi’ was clearly more costly and risky at the beginning, thus many shopkeepers may have waited to see if the tactic was effective before joining the campaign. On the other hand, as said also above, Addiopizzo (as an SMO) has demonstrated over the years to be particularly able to gain media attention. Once established as an important player, Addiopizzo was in fact also able to gain the attention of more institutionalized actors such as Confcommercio. Furthermore, the agreement between Addiopizzo and Concommercio signed in 2001 that brought altogether more than 100 shops into the campaign is consistent with the literature on protest cycles, where it is often mentioned that more established actors are
slower to take direct action. Institutional actors tend to ally with SMOs after mobilization is set in motion by less institutionalized and/or now actors (e.g. Tarrow’s research on the cycle of protest that emerged in Italy over the ‘60s and ‘70s revealed that unions or political parties tended to join mobilization later in time, therefore once mobilization was first put in motion by the so-called ‘early risers’).

The figure below (Fig. 6) clearly show how the number of joiners that entered in the campaign rose sharply after opening the ‘media floodgates’ on the racket issue.

*Fig. 6: Number of articles on extortion and anti-extortion and number of joiners per year*

Finally, the literature on diffusion also talks about non-adopters: people who have not adopted (and presumably will not adopt) the innovation process. As social movement research has pointed out, non-adopters may be the ones that do not have the resources to adopt a given tactical innovation or they may be groups or people with whom an innovative frame simply does not resonate. As other research has pointed out, rackets more often target marginalized groups within a specific territory. As the China, Fagan & Kelly research on the case of Chinese-owned businesses in New York City revealed, shop owners who were better educated and more fluent in English were less likely to be victimized than owners who were less assimilated and therefore more vulnerable to extortion and gang victimization (China, Fagan & Kelly, 1992: 640). A finding that seems to remind that the Mafia must be opposed not only with repressive actions by the police and the judiciary system, but also through different economic planning and policies, aimed on one hand at reducing job insecurity and unemployment, and on the other, at increasing education and information among citizens.

4. Conclusions

The rise of more personalized politics in the anti-Mafia struggle represents one example of some important transformations which are taking place in the organizational form and strategy of several contemporary social movements, as well as of how the transmission and adoption of new frameworks, tactics and forms of action take place in an ever more complex communication world.
As we have seen, like for other movements, also for the anti-Mafia movement the diffusion of digital media has proved important to quicken the spread of detailed information and to ease coordination between the various initiatives put forward by SMOs.

In the Addiopizzo case, besides facilitating the circulation of information and lowering organizational costs, new communication technologies also proved particularly important for the diffusion of information among different sets of actors in a new interpretative framework which brought political consumerism into the repertoire of the anti-Mafia movement, allowing for growing awareness and action across a wide spectrum of actors, including those traditionally reluctant to take collective action against organized crime. 

Also within the anti-Mafia movement, the contemporary increase of political consumerism among broader sectors of the population, observed in the wake of the shift towards personalized politics among citizens (Bennet 1998; 2013), seems in fact to have fostered the conditions for the construction of a new set of alliances among various actors.

When compared with previous forms of actions used by anti-Mafia mobilization, the new strategy identified by Addiopizzo proved particularly affective for two interrelated reasons. First, by appealing to all citizens to manifest their opposition to the Mafia’s territorial power through their own shopping power on a daily basis, Addiopizzo aligned itself with the actions of other rapidly growing large-scale movements in which individuals are mobilized around their personal lifestyle values, such as the Fair Trade movement. Second, by lowering the barriers to identification, these forms of actions clearly facilitate Addiopizzo’s message and activities being reported favourably by the media: a fact that, as seen, has increased the role of indirect channels of diffusion over time.

As the analysis underlines, the spread across various sets of actors (the general public, organizations, shopkeepers, entrepreneurs, professionals, etc.) of new frame, repertoire and campaign occurs both through direct and indirect communication networks, direct ties being more important at the beginning of the mobilization process, and indirect ties more important towards the later stages.

**Interviews**

(int.1[a] [b] [c]) Three member from Addiopizzo, interviews, May 28, 2008
(int.2) Enrico Colajanni, president, Libero Futuro, interview, May 27, 2008
(int.3) Pina Maisano Grassi, Libero Grassi’s widow, interview, May 29, 2008
(int.4) Steni di Piazza, director, Banca Etica, Palermo, interview, May 26, 2008
(int.5) Umberto di Maggio, responsable for Libera a Palermo, interview, May 26, 2008
(int.7) Ivan Lo Bello, presidente, Confindustria Sicilia (and of Banco di Sicilia), interview, May 27, 2008
(int.8) Rodolfo Guajana, businessman, victim of extortion, interview, May 27, 2008
(int.9) Umberto Santino, director, Centro Siciliano di Documentazione "Giuseppe Impastato", interview, May 28, 2008
(int.10) Lirio Abbate, journalist, interview, May 29, 2008
(int.11) Nino Lo Bello, former coordinator, Palermo Anno Uno, December 12, 2012
(int.12) Maurizio Artale, coordinator, Centro Padre Nostro, December 14, 2012
References


Forno F., 2011. La spesa a pizzo zero. Milano: Altreconomia


