

Beyond the Mafia mentality: human development and relational goods

by Antonino Giorgi*

1. Introduction

Modern economics literature with a relational orientation shows that the results of sustainable economic growth, as well as other important variables, are significantly connected to the quality of interpersonal relations (Bruni, 2006; Sacco & Zamagni, 2006). This means, among other things, that economic development can no longer be considered independent of the development of people, of their subjectivity and their reciprocal recognition. It means arguing that the relationship with the Other person, the quality of relationships, is not only indispensable for the construction of identity or for psychological treatment (Lo Verso & Lo Coco, 2006), but it is also an important transformational tool capable of bringing about social change (Brown & Zinkin, 1996) and influencing/steering economic development in one direction rather than another.

For a long time, and not only in western countries, socio-economic growth has increasingly coincided with the category of "Homo Economicus" in its most extreme version: that is, the aim of getting rich at any cost, the drive to treat others as merchandise, and individualism taken to extremes¹. In Sicily, in particular, "Homo Economicus" seems to find it quite easy to find connections for business and other purposes both with the criminal organization 'Cosa Nostra'² and with a widespread and specific way of viewing reality and relations with others, which can be identified with the "Mafia mentality" (Fiore, 1997). Some national statistics³, in fact, indicate Sicily as one of the most classical negative models due to the combination of organized crime with the lag in socio-economic growth⁴. What contributes significantly to causing this lag is not only the fact that the categories of "Homo Economicus", "Homo Mafioso" and "Homo Democristianus"⁵ share business, tenders and money, historical inefficiencies and power, but also, from a psychological viewpoint, the problem of the denial of the existence of the Other as subjectivity.

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¹ "Homo Economicus" is not the perfectly rational actor "invented" by classical economics theory. Here it is meant as a human category that puts its economic interests before all else, that tends to adopt egocentric attitudes that ignore the other person and that, for this very reason, develop their own barbarism, causing terrible impoverishment of environmental, economic, social, cultural, anthropological and relational resources of entire communities (Morin, 2006). Today, however, the category of "Homo Economicus" is no longer so popular. In fact, we see a continual development of movements (voluntary work etc) of various ideological and cultural origins, which demand more sober styles of living and consuming, more sensitive to the natural and social environment, experiences that go in the opposite direction from contemporary hedonism.

² "Cosa nostra", also known as the Mafia, the mob, the outfit, the office, is a collection organized crime "families".

³ The size of the mafia economy is enormous: from agriculture to tourism, from business services to personal services, public tenders, public supplies, the presence of the Mafia undermines every economic activity to such an extent that its turnover has now reached €75 billion, equal to an entrepreneurial giant like ENI, double that of FIAT, ten times more than that of TELECOM (9th Report "SOS-Impresa" by the 'Confesercenti').

⁴ What seems strange in Sicily is the presence of close ties between 'Cosa Nostra', economic power and political power, in the framework of a society that is often assenting and silent. It in fact ranks among the lowest for quality of life, socio-economic growth, and among the highest for the presence of Mafia criminal activity (ISTAT, 2005), where the lack of development has coincided, even recently and at all levels, with the creation of and support for policies of assistance and patronage based exclusively on the management of power and electoral success.

⁵ "Homo Democristianus" (Lo Verso, 2004), being a specific Sicilian psycho-anthropological category characterized by the "mafia mentality" (Fiore, 1997), cuts across all political parties, movements, trade union organizations etc. He cannot be identified with the party of the Christian Democrats. Many Christian democrats (or ex), in fact, do not belong to this category at all and many who have never been members of that party, on the other hand, do. The Christian Democrats have produced rigorous men of quality, also in Sicily.

This article sets out to make a psychodynamic contribution which, placing emphasis on the closeness between modern attempts at relational economic theory (Sacco & Zamagni, 2006; Bruni, 2006; Bruni & La Porta, 2006; Bruni & Zamagni, 2004) and some assumptions of subjectual group-analysis (Lo Verso, 1994; Pontalti, 1998; Fasolo, 2002; Lo Verso & Lo Coco, 2006;) and limiting the discussion to the analysis of “Homo Mafioso” and “Homo Democristianus”, will try to elaborate the concept of relational goods (Brunori, 2004; Lo Verso & Prestano, 2006), exemplifying its importance in a local human development programme⁶ in Sicily.

2. *Attempts at relational economics: a historical overview*

Recently the word “relationship” has been appearing more and more in the vocabulary of economics. Zamagni (2006), underlining the need to go beyond the narrow confines of economic theory’s current individualistic approach, tries to revalue both the concept of the person and the relational dimension of economic reality. Essentially, the intention is that of adopting a new interpretative paradigm, the relational paradigm, alternative to the holistic individualistic one. However, to avoid falling into basic misunderstandings, the economist clarifies:

“I do not by any means intend to claim that economics has not dealt with studying social interactions. Quite the opposite. What I mean is that social interactions are one thing, interpersonal relationships are another: while in the latter the identity of the subjects involved is basic to the relationship, social interactions can be anonymous and impersonal. Moreover, while social interaction has an instrumental nature (every time I trade it is obvious that I relate to someone, but this is only instrumental to my purpose), the interpersonal relationship places importance on the power of the link, as a primordial category of the human reality” (Sacco & Zamagni, 2006, p. 18).

In his writings, Bruni (2006) talks about the importance of the relationship in the dynamics of everyday life. He gives an original interpretation, which is partly unorthodox, of the relationship of reciprocity, presented as a pluralist, multidimensional reality⁷. Traditionally in fact economics dealt only with the instrumental type of sociality. By establishing that economic behaviour is determined by the sum of individual behaviours, he has eliminated the psycho-social dimension from economic analysis. However, it is difficult to imagine a more improbable hypothesis than the one saying that economic behaviour can be taken out of the social dimension⁸.

“In fact it is increasingly a point of agreement among economists that it is not methodologically acceptable or descriptively correct to assume that economic relations occur on a constant substratum: the interpersonal dimension can be significantly determined and influenced also by economic factors (for instance the growth of markets tending to erode spaces once occupied by relational goods that were created as by-products of non-market interactions). On the other hand the quality of relational life has important economic effects: we know, on the basis of strong, widespread empirical evidence, that people placed in working environments that care about the quality of relations also have better working performances (at the other end of this spectrum we have mobbing)” (Bruni, 2006, p. 2).

⁶ The Human Development Index is an indicator of macroeconomic development, created by the Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq in 1990. It has been used as a new tool to measure development alongside the GDP (Gross Domestic Product), by the United Nations since 1993, to assess the quality of life in member countries. It is a complex indicator which takes into account not only pro-capita income, but also numerous other elements that help to determine living conditions: life expectancy, the quantity of food calories available per head, the level of literacy and school attendance, access to services, the availability of drinking water, the degree of political freedom (www.globalgeografia.com). In this paper, our suggested improvement is that the calculation should also be determined by the measurement of the degree of social support, the degree of happiness and of the quality of relational life (relational goods) per head.

⁷ The forms identified are: cautious reciprocity, pro-reciprocity and unconditional reciprocity. When less conditional forms of reciprocity establish themselves, a society can develop in which different cultures live together, a more creative and happier life.

⁸ Economic theory today is increasingly interested in the study of relational dynamics in order to understand both outside-the-market behaviour and genuinely pro-social behaviour within ordinary market dynamics such as the voluntary contribution to public goods.

The importance of reciprocity is also reinforced by the analysis of subjective well-being in relation to economic variables. A great deal of empirical research into the “happiness paradox” shows that the quality of relational life is the most important dimension (also concerning the income level) in the subjective evaluation on one’s well-being⁹. In fact, an important factor

“that has enabled the principle of reciprocity to be re-admitted to the universe of economics is the so-called paradox of happiness [.....]. As long as economic theory managed to make it seem that being happy was the same thing as having happiness, it was able to sell us utility for happiness and therefore to convince us that maximizing utility was not only a rational, but also a reasonable operation, that is an expression of wisdom. The truth was out when it was discovered, by empirical and non-deductive means, that beyond a certain level, the increase in income pro-capite reduces subjective well-being”. (Bruni & La Porta, 2006, p. 35).

The paradox of happiness seems to be linked to the fact that in western economies, despite a significant growth in traditional consumption, beyond a certain threshold of economic well-being, there is a more and more common perception of a reduction in personal well-being and quality of life. This means that people’s well-being and quality of life do not derive only from the utility goods and services that can be purchased. Essentially, money is useful and counts, but so-called relational goods seem to be more useful and count even more.

The relational good is a category (and an empirical fact) directly connected to reciprocity¹⁰. It was introduced into the scientific debate almost simultaneously by four authors: the philosopher Nussbaum, the sociologist Donati (1986), the economists Gui (1987) and Uhlener (1989), who defines them as goods that can be possessed only through reciprocal agreements made after appropriate joint action taken by a person and by others non arbitrarily. Nussbaum (1986, 1996), unlike the other authors¹¹, considers relational goods

“those human experiences where it is the relationship itself that is the good. Friendship, mutual love and civil commitment are three typical relational goods in which it is the relationship itself that is the good: therefore, relational goods are born and die with the relationship itself. Moreover, relational goods are particularly fragile: these components of the good life are destined not to be at all self-sufficient. Instead they will be vulnerable in a particularly profound and dangerous way” (Nussbaum, 1996, p. 624).

Bruni (2006) classifies relational goods as a third genre compared to traditional public or private goods. In other words, they are a specific category of goods with the following basic characteristics:

“a) *Identity*: the identity of the people involved is a fundamental ingredient; b) *Reciprocity*: being goods made of relationships, they can be enjoyed only in reciprocity; c) *Simultaneousness*: unlike normal market goods where production is technically separate from consumption, relational goods are co-produced and co-consumed contemporarily by the people involved; d) *Motivation*: in genuine reciprocal relations the motivation behind the behaviour is an essential component. The same occasion, such as a dinner for example, creates relational goods or only standard goods depending on the subjects’ motivation. If the relationship is not an end in itself but only a means to something else (doing business), it is not possible to talk about relational goods. This does not mean that in a business relationship

⁹ Besides the economics works cited, remember for instance the studies of a psychological nature by Kahneman (2004).

¹⁰ The theory of “*we rationality*” (Tuomela, 1995) and the category of relational goods are innovative elaborations for dealing with sociality. In this paper we will confine our analysis to relational goods, referring to the bibliography for further details of the current studies on reciprocity in economics.

¹¹ For Gui and Uhlener relational goods do not coincide with the relationship itself but are a component of it. In particular, for Gui the relational good is separate from the subjective characteristics. In this way he tries to safeguard the continuity with economics which sees a good as being separate from the act of consumption. For Donati, it is the effects emerging from action, not the effect of the actor’s choices or of the environment, but the product of concrete relations that can change the actors’ will. Due to this feed-back relational goods cannot be linked to the actors’ will.

an authentic relational good cannot be created; e) *Emerging fact*: the relational good emerges from within a relationship. The category of emerging fact captures the nature of a relational good better than the economic category of production. To say that it is an emerging fact puts the stress on the fact that the relational good is a third party that goes beyond the contributions of the subjects involved, and in many cases was not even part of the initial intentions; f) *Gratuitousness*: in the sense that the relational good is such if the relationship is not used for some other purpose. If it is experienced as a good in itself, if it arises from intrinsic motivation. The relational good is a good where the relationship is the good, that is, a relationship that is not a meeting of self-interest but of gratuitousness; g) *Good*: in the sense that it is a good and not merchandise, therefore it has a value (because it satisfies a need) but not a price (being gratuitous)" (Bruni, 2006, pp.16-18).

The Author also takes an interest in the dynamic nature of relational goods, trying to provide a model that analyses some aspects of the form of relating that is shared and constructed in the course of time. In this sense, it seems that the quality of the relationship that is established between people is a very important element in bringing out the relational good. The activity of relating, in fact, is influenced not only by the current effort people make, but also by the past efforts that made up the stock of relational goods from the previous periods (Bruni, Naimzada & Radon, 2006).

Relational goods, moreover, are not only linked to understanding the paradox of happiness, but even to the very existence of the economy. In fact, if the economy is nothing but instrumental interchange, we come to one of its most worrying paradoxes: bad money ejects good money¹². This is a mechanism that has a broader effect, acting, for instance every time gratuitousness (intrinsic motivation) comes up against the economic profit motive (extrinsic motivation): the good money is cast out by the bad money. Instrumental, utilitarian contact ejects other forms of human relationship. If this is all it is, the local and global market develops but at the same time reduces the state in which it exists, based on faith and on people's inclination to cooperate. Once the relational good has emerged, on the other hand, it enters the institutions in which society is organized, including profit-making firms, and tends to reduce and to oppose the negative effects of the exaggerated economic model. They therefore have not only a social, but also an economic value. Essentially, what assumes particular importance in favouring economic activity are those interpersonal relations that actually form real relational goods which spread knowledge, serve in regulation and protection, coordination and social support, thus making cooperation and reciprocity possible.

The historical-descriptive analysis of the relational aspect in economics essentially shows how urgent is the need to develop an economic theory of relational goods, not yet available probably due to the complexity of the object of study, and difficult to make "operational" with the tools of economic knowledge alone. Not only is it to be hoped that the economists will fill this gap, but also that they will do so in an interdisciplinary perspective. In other words, what needs to be constructed is a complex interdisciplinary theory that takes into account over two decades of relationally oriented psychological research¹³, since elaboration on relational goods is centred on the concept of the relationship itself and on subjectivity.

In this sense, some seminars held in Venice in 2000, by the "*Group Analytic Society (GAS)*" on the issue of "*Money and its meaning, starting from the group*", were in some respects fundamental. In fact, during these seminars, in which well-known group-analysts and economists participated, it was clear how much today's relationally-oriented economics studies reveal the great affinity between the economic theory of sustainable development and some fundamental assumptions of

¹² Greshman's Law is one of the earliest economic laws, probably the first economic law to apply to monetary trade (<http://it.wikipedia.org>).

¹³ Humanistic scientific literature, not only that with a relational orientation, has often enjoyed little attention. It has been artificially separated from the explanations of economic development, probably due also to the reductionist, ideological epistemological model adopted by economics. In actual fact, humanistic scientific works have always been related, whether directly or not, to economic "facts". Recently, however, economists, benefiting from dialogue and cross-fertilization with other disciplines (psychology, anthropology, sociology), have started to show a new interest in the phenomena of consumption, of its communicative and symbolic dimensions.

group-analysis. In particular, as Luisa Brunori¹⁴ recalls, the category of relational goods, and human relating, reveal the communicative link and interdisciplinary connection.

“This link made itself seen during several study days when money and group relations were discussed. The group’s relational contents and the individual’s process of acquiring resources showed extraordinary points of contact [...]. In other words, in the detailed discussion that took place on the issue, it became clearer and clearer that there was an almost total overlap between the rules of the group designed for the pursuit of individual growth and the acquisition of resources/economic capacities [...]. It is therefore no surprise that we have appropriated the concept of relational goods in an absolutely specific form tied to psychological epistemology” (Brunori, 2004, p.96).

3. Relational goods and subjectual group-analytical model.

Analysing the current scientific literature reveals the evolution of dynamic and clinical psychology from an individualist conception of the structuring of psychic life towards a conception that stresses the importance of the relational field in constructing personal identity. Numerous psychological contributions (ethno-psychiatry, ethno-psychoanalysis, etc.) show the importance assumed in the identity formation process by certain cultural codes and values transmitted through socialization channels and conveyed through the family.

Subjectual group-analysis (Lo Verso, 1989, 1994; Pontalti, 1998; Fasolo, 2002; Lo Coco & Lo Verso, 2006) is positioned in this precise frame of reference, also of an epistemological kind (Morin, 1982). It is a model of psychodynamic origin (Jervis, 1993) which, in developing the psychoanalytical theory, though showing some points of discontinuity, focuses on the actual centrality of the individual-environment of the relationship in the structuring of psychic life. Essentially, for subjectual group-analysis, the relationship.

“it is something more than a good. It is the core of life itself. From the relationship is born man, from it he is conceived, without a relational world he would not become human. The concepts of the internal group (Napolitani, 1987), the internal family system and the family psychological field (Pontalti, 1998), transpersonal (Lo Verso, 1994), have helped us to understand the links between relational experience and unconscious identity. Our elaboration develops some of Foulkes’s insights (the group is the source of mental life) and can be integrated with the English elaborations on the relation between the society and the individual. In this perspective the “I” is also the Other person. The concepts of family identification and conception complete this picture, which aims to bring about, on a therapeutic level, the growth of subjectivity and personal individuation as the condition for living with the relationships inside and outside of oneself. Moreover, in group-analysis, differences are considered important and useful enough to constitute a transformational therapeutic factor” (Lo Verso & Prestano, 2006, p. 542).

Moreover, the subjectual group-analytical elaboration has been and still is constantly enriched with ethno-psychoanalytic works on the relation between psyche and culture, with those of the Italian school of family therapy (Cigoli, 2006) and with neuroscience research (Siegel, 2006).

Subjectual group-analysis, therefore, presents itself as a theoretical-explicative model of clinical-social therapeutic practice which, in a new multi-disciplinary discourse on human development, is able to offer important cognitive contributions and also models of psycho-social change. In fact, the link with economic theories is certainly no new task for the group-analytical theory, since the specific aspect of its theorization is that of connecting the person to the context, and it is therefore impossible to avoid the economic aspects, either of micro or macro-system (Brunori, 2004). Essentially,

“in an age of migration, globalization, extraordinary and at the same time terrifying economic developments due to injustice, violence, human and environmental destruction, group-

¹⁴ Full Professor of Group Psychology at the University of Bologna, coordinator of the “Workshop for Research and Development of Group Psychology” at the Department of Psychology – University of Bologna.

analysis can help to bring home to us the positive value of the Other person and of the difference. It can also provide potential tools to help the process of civilization that our species has to undergo in the third millennium to avoid being reduced to barbarity. Learning tolerance and the relativity of individual, family and cultural truths also requires an emotional and relational maturation and a capacity for de-paranoidization. We agree with the idea that there can be no real ecology if there is no internal and relational ecology. Therefore, can we manage the complexity, change and extremely rapid evolution underway with a primitive psychic apparatus? How can group-analysis contribute to this development? By asserting the importance of relational goods” (Lo Verso & Prestano, 2006, p.543).

The current group-analytical reflection on relational goods is fruitfully oriented to the search for a clear, unequivocal systematization. In this precise direction, therefore, the thoughts on relational goods put forward have no intention of assuming a permanent character, but simply want to enrich the scientific debate underway. Should they not be totally clear and definite, Morin (1983) writes that “the only worthwhile knowledge is that which feeds on uncertainty, and the only living thought is that which survives at the temperature of its own destruction” (p. 32).

In the concept of relational good, according to the economists, the attribute of ‘good’ recalls the concepts of production function and of inputs. In fact, it is possible to imagine the interpersonal relationship as a particular production function combining material inputs and intangible inputs of a psycho-affective kind, in order to obtain both strictly economic goods, and relational goods.

For group-analysis it is the relationship itself that is the relational good, whose nature is therefore psychodynamic. Relational goods seem to be those relationships that, through the cognitive-affective recognition of the Other person as subjectivity, favour both personal development and well-being, and capacity to optimise economic resources *and/or* develop/guide business projects towards sustainable, supportive modalities, rather than predatory modalities causing impoverishment. In certain conditions, in fact, there may emerge relational goods between two or more people when, at a given time and in a given context, they share, even temporarily, objectives of the same¹⁵ and of different kinds¹⁶.

Again according to economists, among the inputs that come into play in such a production process we can identify so-called “*relational assets*” (or “*stock*”) whose existence and whose size depend on the number, quality, and intensity of previous interactions that have taken place between people. This means that, according to the groupanalytic theory, the likelihood of relational goods emerging is closely connected to the identities, subjective motivations, relational dynamics of the groups belonged to (present and past, internal and external), to the institutional variables, to the historical- anthropological roots of the context.

In economics, goods are seen as being any object available in limited quantities, accessible and useful, that is, suited to satisfying a need. They are neutral, but Douglass (1984) argues that their uses are social: they can be used as barriers or bridges. Goods are actually symbols. In fact, as soon as their primary needs are satisfied, people do not continue to consume goods because they are interested in the goods as such, but because they represent something else. In other words, goods are containers of relations, of human relationships, of subjectivity.

Starting from these ideas, but not only from these, Brunori¹⁷ makes a stimulating and coherent groupanalytical elaboration of relational goods. The Author places so-called positional goods¹⁸

¹⁵ Think of the whole world of social voluntary work, of cooperation and of the third sector, of microcredit, etc.

¹⁶ Bruni (2006) gives the example of when, during a normal work meeting, one of the participants receives a phone call from home: the meeting is interrupted, and the person involved starts talking about his children and private matters not envisaged on the meeting’s agenda. In those few minutes, the subjects can create and consume relational goods. Or when, in a group of psychological elaboration in a Social Assistance Residence, the participants suddenly decide that in turns each of them will go and pick up the others from their homes in their own cars. In such cases, as in many others, the interpersonal relationship is able to combine intangible goods (support, faith, comfort, dialogue, resonance, socialization, mirroring, altruism, friendship, etc.) but also tangible goods of an economic kind (the team works better, reaches the company objectives more easily, the family members optimise their time, pollute less, save money on fuel, etc.)

¹⁷ This is meant to be a synthesis of Prof. Luisa Brunori’s talk at the seminar on “*Mafia psychology: a research project in Sicily*”, as part of the project of great national interest (PRIN -2004): “*How the Mafia thinks. Relations, autonomies and dependencies in the mind of the men of ‘Cosa Nostra’*. *Clinical-social*

alongside relational goods, and argues that their consumption, and the possibility of consuming one type rather than the other, is what underlies two different relational modes, or ways people function in psycho-relational terms, called respectively, “relational goods type” and “positional goods type” attitude, immersed in a continuum of human relations¹⁹.

Positional goods, by definition, are those goods that lose value after being circulated and becoming widely used. They in fact imply an unequal distribution among people, eliminating the possibility of reciprocal growth. They are characterised by verticality, competitiveness, antagonism and rivalry, that is, by a zero-sum relation of individual-group, individual-individual, and group-individual, where somebody necessarily wins and somebody loses (if my new mobile phone increases my utility, the utility my colleague gains from his “old” mobile phone decreases). This relational modality coincides with the psychosocial dynamics of the current model of market economy, whose measurement is the Gross Domestic Product. Relational goods, on the other hand, are goods that acquire more and more value after being circulated and widely used. They are characterised by horizontality, cooperation and reciprocity, that is, by positive sum relations of individual-group, individual-individual, and group-individual, where all the people involved necessarily win (from a friendly relationship everybody increases their “utility” by “consuming” that good). This relational mode coincides with the psychosocial dynamics of the economic model of the so-called “civil economy”, which is measured by the Human Development Index.

In the group-analytical perspective, as we have described it, the human identity is characterised from the very beginning by its “culturality”, that is, the establishment – the earlier it happens, the more stable they are - of transpersonal relational segments of the environment where the individual is born and grows. The identity is therefore composed of interiorized relations which as a whole make up an internal grouping (Napolitani, 1987; Giannone & Lo Verso, 1994). From this individual identity, in particular from its degree of capacity and from the relational mode through which it recognises the existence of the Other person as subjectivity, derives the possibility of adopting one attitude rather than the other.

Essentially, from a group-analytical viewpoint, the possibility of relational goods emerging and of these contributing to development in Sicily, is inhibited by the problem of the denial of the existence of the Other as subjectivity, shared by “Homo Mafioso” “Homo Economicus” and “Homo Democristianus”. Naturally, there are important differences in their sharing of this approach. For “Homo Democristianus”, the Other covers few categories: client, vote-bringer, ally, opponent. The Other, in short, may be useful or not, and is exclusively a tool that serves to satisfy egoistic familism. For “Homo Economicus” and for “Homo Fondamentalist” (also including “Homo Mafioso”), on the other hand, the Other as such has no right to be considered a person: instead of existing and conveying a life and feelings of his own, the Other is seen, in the first case, as a loyal, unthinking consumer, while for the second he serves as the doormat of some supreme “We” in which the “I” dissolves and is totally annulled. Moreover, the instrumental reasoning of “Homo Democristianus” is purely opportunistic: patronage and string-pulling, while that of the various

depth-studies and models for change”. Complesso Monumentale San Pietro Marsala, February 2007, to whom the author acknowledges an important scientific debt. Should there be any inaccuracies, the author apologises in advance.

¹⁸ The concept of positional goods was introduced in economics around the 1970s by Hirsch. The utility of these goods is not due so much to their consumption as to the fact that they represent a label, a social status, of the single person compared to others: the person who buys positional goods is not interested in the content of the good but in the order in which he comes to possess it; if he is the first to own it he is satisfied and if he obtains it later he is unhappy. In general, the satisfaction guaranteed by positional goods is used up over time because anyway sooner or later the positions won will also be reached by others and the race to keep ahead of the rest of society will start again. “Homo Economicus” increases a sort of temporary happiness, which ends when the others have reached the same level of consumption or have passed it. Or anyway when the satisfaction with consuming those goods fades into habit. And then it is necessary to consume more and more.

¹⁹ Economists and psychologists agree that positional competition and the growing levels of consumption of positional goods takes place at the expense of relational goods. Economic growth takes place in fact above all to the detriment of relational goods, replaced by positional goods or conventional goods to be paid for. Moreover, the progressive extension of positional goods seems associated with an increasing desertification in relations. So, while the two attitudes can coexist in the same person, the “positional goods type” attitude tends in certain conditions to completely “replace” the other one.

psychological fundamentalisms is tragic. In fact, the idea that “what is useful is true” was followed by “Homo Democristianus” for the sake of opportunism and not in order to construct purifications from evil, as has been done by every kind of totalitarianism: political, ethnic, religious, economic, etc. (Lo Verso, 2004).

5. How “Homo Mafioso” sees development

The literature on the Sicilian Mafia is historically vast. There have been an enormous number of attempts, of varying quality, to understand and to go beyond the phenomenon²⁰. The attempt to understand it from a psychological standpoint is however quite recent²¹. After psycho-social and psychoanalytical studies, a more systematic empirical scientific approach was begun by the Palermo group-analysis school, which for about fifteen years has also been examining mafia psychology, trying to understand the psychic aspects related to a certain way of acting and being. Essentially, through studies and field research, subjectual group-analysis has tried to make an in-depth investigation of the psycho-anthropological elements characterising the specificity both of Cosa Nostra and of the mafia “culture”. The great amount of research conducted and still underway²², based essentially on on first hand data²³, has enabled the theoretical construct of “mafia psychism” to be defined (Lo Verso, 1998, 1999, 2003). By this is meant an unconscious matrix of thought that moulds many aspects of daily life. Mafia psychism is therefore configured as a perfect anthropo-psychic organization that helps to give “Cosa Nostra” its particular characteristics²⁴. In the study of the psychological factors that typify “mafia psychism”, psychological fundamentalism plays a role of primary importance. Its essential characteristic is the fact that the “We” identity of the Cosa Nostra organization, or in other cases of the ethnic group, religion, homeland, party, or family of the anthropological-cultural reference model, is almost totally superimposed on the “I” identity. Essentially, the mafia man’s sense of identity acquires meaning, i.e. exists, for himself and for others, only because he is a Man of Honor of the mafia family that controls that precise Sicilian jurisdiction. What supports the identity of the mafia man is a symbolic and psychic bond of a fundamentalist type with the “mafia-We”, which holds that either you are a ‘mafioso’ or you are nothing, you do not exist. The fundamentalist psyche, in fact, cannot be challenged. Having a fundamentalist psyche means not being a person, but a sort of robot, a photocopy of the “We” (the mafia ‘we’) that invented it²⁵. Psychological fundamentalism is related

²⁰ Examples are the Falcone “method”, the vast historiography of the mafia in Sicily, the introduction of the hard prison regime for those sentenced with mafia crimes, the “La Torre” law on the confiscation of property from mafia members.

²¹ It was only in the early ‘80s that studies with a marked scientific sensibility were first published. The result was that a great deal of time had been lost, allowing the understanding of the mafia phenomenon to be done often only at the judicial and normative, historical and sociological levels (studies, however, of great importance and quality). This caused undue simplification which led, among other things, to difficulty in really understanding the scope of the phenomenon and also in constructing effective psychosocial tools to fight and prevent it.

²² Currently a research project of great national relevance is underway (PRIN–2006) “*The Mafia within: the mind, the autonomies and dependences of the men of Cosa Nostra, ‘Ndrangheta and Camorra, and of the relational world of subjects and groups with emotional experiences close to organized crime. In-depth clinical-social studies and models for change*”, whose national scientific head is prof. Girolamo Lo Verso.

²³ Clinical interviews, groups of psychological elaboration and other specific tools, used with witnesses turned state’s evidence, judges, lawyers, gangster’s lovers, politicians, members of the police, ordinary people and opinion leaders, gangsters’ family members, etc.

²⁴ Cosa Nostra does not coincide with organized crime alone, but is also a psychological phenomenon, an effective manipulation and deformation of traditional Sicilian cultural codes, an extreme form of family model, with the protective and the punitive elements, identifiable respectively in the maternal code and the paternal code (Di Maria, 1998).

²⁵ The “mafia-We” is not a false “Self”. The false “Self” (Kouth, 1976) implies the existence of a real “Self” conveyed by the person. In actual fact the “mafia-We” is a “non Self”, a non singularity, if by “Self” one means the category of subjectivity: “*You say I am better than you? No, I am not better, I identify with you and I believe in our cause. I was brought up in this way and it’s how I will be until I die*”. This was how Trapani mafia boss, Matteo Messina Denaro responded to Bernardo Provenzano, in a *pizzino* found in his hideaway

almost antonymically to discontinuity and transformation. When the fundamentalist psyche is rethought or challenged it is as if it loses the aspects that give it self-definition. "Homo Mafioso", like nationalism, racism, religious fanaticism, a particular part of the current economic-manipulative and mass-media system ("Homo Economicus"), belongs to the world of fundamentalisms. All fundamentalisms, favouring the "We" of membership, share an indifference towards the Other person, that is, a rejection of the subjective "I" and of the identification with what is different from oneself. From an analytic standpoint, therefore, it is the "We" that speaks in the fundamentalist.

The mafia man is "fundamentalist", from an anthropo-psychological point of view, because he thinks automatically, as Cosa Nostra tells him to do, he even feels emotions and affects as he has been taught by the family, by the culture and then by the mafia organization: he is entirely unconsciously conceived by Cosa Nostra. In exactly this direction, it is important to underline the idealization that the mafia psyche makes of itself, in the identificative process with its own transpersonal²⁶. In fact, it is good and just, in dichotomical opposition to every thing that is different from itself, and that represents evil, the wrong, the enemy to fight. In other words it is not possible to subject any of its psychological categories to verification, to complex subjective thought²⁷. However, to avoid creating naïve misunderstandings, it must be underlined that there are also great differences, for instance, "in the system of values that drives the various fundamentalisms. For instance the goals of Cosa Nostra, essentially power and money, cannot be compared with religious goals, the safeguarding of cultural identity, ethnic, racial, economic, imperial domination, or that of social justice, etc. These are all things that are very different in every sense, also ethically, from each other" (Lo Verso, 2005, p.35).

The model of (non)development pursued by "Homo Mafioso" is exclusively aimed at getting rich at any cost, and above all at power, psychological and real, over everything and everyone. It is no coincidence in fact that it identifies with the Sicilian saying: "cumannàri è mughghiu di fùttiri" (commanding is better than making love). This model finds practical application through its imposition both by force and with the chameleon-like capacity to weave relationships of collaboration with anything that is considered useful for the achievement of its purpose. In fact, its predatory power to impose and hinder, lies precisely in its capacity:

"to control the area, not just through protection money, but also by creating 'collusions' with fear, corruption, the solution of private interests, and in its 'business' organization supported with military force, as in its capacity to impose its own 'culture' of silence and of connivance, the denial of its very existence, the substitution of mafia values for social values, the deformation of the traditional values of Sicilian culture to its own ends, national and international relations with top-level powers and with organized crime at many levels, etc." (Lo Verso, 2005, p. 36).

One of the strengths of Cosa Nostra, is therefore the capacity to obtain external cooperation, to create particular networks of relations with the political world, with business, health, society, inside and outside Sicily, to establish exchanges and encourage obligations and favours. These networks of relations are pervasive, impoverishing, based on false trust, not reciprocal but univocal, totally instrumental. In the areas where Cosa Nostra is deeply rooted, in fact, the relational capital, personal and collective, is unexpressed, inhibited, the bond of trust is fragile, and this takes away

at Corleone. *Pizzino* is an [Italian language](#) word derived from [Sicilian language](#) equivalent *pizzinu*. small slips of paper that the Sicilian mafia uses for high-level communications. Sicilian mafia boss [Bernardo Provenzano](#) is among those best known for using the *pizzini*,

²⁶With the transpersonal concept Lo Verso (1994, 1998) means the fundamental fact, on the anthropo-psychic level, of the birth of the psyche and therefore of the human personality. The transpersonal is a historical-anthropological concept that is different both from that of the unconscious expounded by Freud, and from that of the collective unconscious expounded by Jung. In fact, the characteristic they share concerns the importance attributed to unconscious processes, while what is fundamentally different is the fact that the unconscious itself is no longer seen as an immutable object but is, instead, full of history and of force for the future.

²⁷Complex thought (Morin, 2006), indicates the possibility of going beyond the logic of reductionist black and white thinking. In fact its principles are dialogic, complex and multidimensional. It offers a real alternative to the extreme reductionism of fundamentalism

any possibility of activating adequate development processes²⁸. Essentially, the “mafia” relationship is absolutely not a relational good, and it is not “intended” to be one, precisely because it does not recognise the Other as subjectivity, but instead, exclusively in two ways: as a replica of the “mafia-We” and/or as a “thing” (“cosa”) which, depending on the criminal aims, can be used as one likes, and even killed. It is no coincidence that a person outside Cosa Nostra, but who colludes with it, is totally subjugated and in practice bound to it forever, whether it is an ordinary person, a powerful politician, a rich businessman, a judge, etc.²⁹. Meeting Cosa Nostra, even more or less in secret, means being afraid of it and feeling fear. What happens when a local politician, a manager, or ordinary, respectable people have their country cottage or their beach house burnt? What happens in their “inner world”? Are they afraid when they think of it? How far will their probable psychic suffering also coincide with the impossibility of continuing (in the same way) with their political activity, their work, their normal life?

“A local politician with a wife and three children, has a political mandate from a small town in the Palermo area. He is a respectable person, like many Sicilians. During his mandate, which he carries out with coherence and commitment, he is very propositive. He has good ideas and projects that in part he manages to carry out, while others are still underway. One winter’s night they burn his house in the country! He feels annihilated, he doesn’t know what to do, what to think, who did it and why; but he immediately thinks of the mafia and he doesn’t know why. He is also frightened, especially for his family. As time goes by he appears less in public and resigns from his office, he is rarely seen in town. A short time later he meets a close friend and tells him he often thinks of what happened to him, he has even dreamt of it sometimes, and is still frightened. He feels paralysed, unable to think about his future, demotivated and with no desire to do anything.”³⁰

This experience of real life, like many other similar experiences in Sicily, show how Cosa Nostra prevents not only economic development but also psychological growth. Its action is doubly criminal insofar as it not only causes economic damage, but also produces psychological violence that stops the imagination from working, hinders planning for the future and the goals to reach: its action paralyzes all forms of development. Essentially, “mafia psychism”, characterized by a psychological fundamentalism that saturates the mental field, conceives only mortally destructive relations. From the group-analytical perspective, therefore, it represents an adamant opposition to the existence of relational goods, (one could talk about a “positional goods type” of psychic fundamentalism) and can be considered psychopathology precisely because it prevents individual psychological development, subjective autonomy, and intimate relational sharing for those who join it and for those who are subjected to it (Lo Verso, 2005).

6. Relational goods and mafia “culture”

The block of psychic and economic development in Sicily is exacerbated by the presence of the so-called “mafia culture”. This refers to something very widespread, tied to the denial of social rules, and in favour of private, familistic rules instead. This does not necessarily correspond to crime and seems to guide a great deal of personal and collective behaviour. Cosa Nostra, in this sense, finds its roots in the instrumentalization of some specific Sicilian psycho-anthropological and cultural dimensions that create and support it, giving it its uniqueness. It must be pointed out,

²⁸ Naturally all this is amplified and complicated by other factors such as the economy, the environment, and politics. “Cosa Nostra”’s control of the area inevitably greatly reduces the opportunities of the local context, creating ruinous negative effects on local growth.

²⁹ In Sicily, people’s freedom to be and to achieve is greatly limited. Protection money has to be paid for the opening of any business activity, the friend of “friends” has to be kept happy when he asks one to take on staff certainly not selected for their professional skills. When a tender is awarded for the construction of a sewage plant, a road, or whatever, it is necessary, whether voluntarily or not, to give each of the “friends” his part in terms of money, machinery and workers.

³⁰ The example given is from the great bulk of data obtained from the PRIN–2004: “*How the Mafia thinks. Relations, autonomies and dependencies in the mind of the men of ‘Cosa Nostra’. Clinical-social depth-studies and models for change*”.

however, that it is the mafia men that resemble the Sicilians, it is the “mafia culture” that is the offspring of Sicilian culture, and not vice-versa: Cosa Nostra has in fact taken to extremes, distorted and used for merely criminal purposes the traditional values of the Sicilian culture, which in themselves, are certainly not negative³¹.

Vital for the understanding of this resemblance is the “mafia mentality” (Fiore, 1998), that is, a particular way of thinking that defines the codes of conduct on the way of being and relating to others and to the world around one. Naturally, resembling does not mean being the same and this important difference must be kept in mind: there is not just one way of being Sicilian, there are many ways, and the mafia way is just one among many others. In fact, it should always be stressed that in Sicily, there has always been a solid and widespread way of being a Sicilian opposed to the mafia, supported by strong ethical and moral values.

The “mafia mentality”, in Sicily, is expressed through personal and collective behaviour, values, cognitive and affective modalities unconsciously acted out in daily life. In particular it activates a precise way of interpreting the world and relating to it, characterized by distortions of the public-private relationship: institutions and public organizations are conceived and acted out exclusively as the “family-We”. In this way, the community and extra-family groups coincide exactly with the family world, making the construction and existence of the “society-We” almost impossible.

The “mafia mentality”, is essentially the way of thinking of “Homo Democristianus”, who, in Sicily, has always juxtaposed to the “We” of the State, of society, of the rules, of legality, an “I”/“We” that is sly, parasitic and populist; a seemingly tolerant “I”, which tends to impose itself and does not allow the existence of the diversity of others, unless it is as pure instrumentalism. The Other person, if a subject, and not controllable, has always been considered a threat. This is the only way to explain the fact that the “I” of “Homo Democristianus” has always, in turn, been a familist-type and perhaps also tribal “We” (Lo Verso, 2004). The assistential, patronage-bound model of “Homo Democristianus”, even more pervasive and dominant today, can be connected to the prolonging of the maternal culture (Di Maria, 1998) which, infinitely infantilizing, prevents subjective growth and interprets politics exclusively as the request/offer of protection without personal responsibility. Caring and subjugating, in fact, the idea is transmitted that Sicilians do not need to work, study, commit themselves and achieve excellence to achieve psychological, social and economic well-being. Indeed, all this is quite futile³².

“A poor man has been loyally serving the Hon. X for many years. Finally he is found a safe job. At this point a friend says: “now you can leave Hon.X”; his reply is chilling: “Sure, and what about my son?”. The son is seven. We can condemn the passivity of the man but we have to keep in mind that he lived (and lives) in a southern economy where he was taught [translator’s note: *‘taught’ in Italian is ‘in-segnato’, i.e. marked within*] that a job is obtained through total, loyal submissiveness to the powerful. Actually there is something else that is taught as an alternative, but in our opinion for many it works more as a deterrent than as a real alternative, ending up strengthening the servility: he can emigrate [...]. One of the Sicilian Region’s best civil servants, well-known for his incorruptability and great organizational and managerial competence, is appointed commissioner of a hospital. His management is judged “extraordinary” for efficiency, correctness and functionality, by everyone. When his term expires, the press, public opinion, trade unions, doctors all publicly ask for his reconfirmation. A Regional councillor, leader of a section of a party that is part of the government majority opposes it strenuously. Meeting an acquaintance, the councillor, vents his anger, saying: “that job is mine! Why are they wronging me like this?” The statement and the question are

³¹ It is fundamental to be clear on this, so as not to be confused by the stereotype “all Sicilians are mafiosi” and therefore if “everything is mafia nothing is mafia”, thus allotting the Sicilians to the mafia. In other words, for instance, the cult of illegal building, an illegitimate and illegal behaviour as well as an inexhaustible source of non-development, certainly cannot, and must not, be compared to certain criminal behaviour of the mafia. The prejudice of considering all Sicilians mafia men, in fact, saturates the complexity of Sicily.

³² However, the Sicilians who have emigrated all over the world are known to be excellent workers, capable managers, successful men. It seems that, being so used to a paranoid, difficult world like that of the island of Sicily, going to a different world, they find to their great surprise that everything is far easier. From a psychological viewpoint, this means that this is not at all personological, but anthropological, data. The same people are different depending on the contexts. Naturally, anthropology is meant here as the point of creation of the psyche and not something related to abstract culture.

incomprehensible unless it is explained that in the subdivision of the city, traditionally his section of the party is assigned one Health Service director post. The interesting thing is that our councillor, but we could say the same of a certain class of politicians, is absolutely convinced he is in the right and victim of an injustice. Most of the leading figures of his party agree with him. When the quality of the director is pointed out to them and the importance for a regional hospital to work well, they reply with amazement: "what's that got to do with it? And then go on: "he is not part of the section that is entitled to the directorship" (Spaltro, Sangiorgi & Evangelisti, 1998, pp. 129-130).

Essentially, for "Homo Democristianus", the Other person does not have the status of subjectivity, but serves exclusively and is at the service of the "family-We"³³, in a situation of great psychic dependency. The relational world of "Homo Democristianus" is centred on dependency and he can conceive solely relations that lead to psychological dependency of the Other person towards him. This relational mode makes a considerable contribution to building and maintaining a profoundly damaged relational system (internal and external), naturally to a lesser degree and in a different quality from what is built and maintained by "mafia psychism". In other words, "mafia culture" cannot make relational goods emerge because it is imprisoned in a way of thinking where the "society-We", the development of subjectivity and of the community is lacking, like a vacuum in thought.

In actual fact, the "family-We", if it is not saturated and saturating, is able to make relational goods emerge. In Sicily (but not only there), in fact, the family has been, and still is, in certain respects, a relational good that has allowed psychic³⁴ but also economic³⁵ survival. The alternative to "mafia culture", to "Homo Democristianus", in fact, is not the destruction of Mediterranean social values (the welfare state can be an expression of civilization if it is cleansed, as often happens in Europe, of political patronage and parasitism). Values like friendship (relational good par excellence), family, hospitality, conviviality, gift-giving, community, respect for the weak, acceptance of difference, interpersonal love, honour, are extraordinary things and chances to escape, in the third millennium, from all barbarism and from the culture of the Other as a demon to be eliminated, or to treat as if he doesn't exist, perhaps by combining them with work, quality and efficacy (Lo Verso, 2004).

Beating the "mafia culture" is not an individual process, but a group process in a broader sense. In this sense, the context³⁶ becomes more and more important as do the relational modalities through which the people in the context meet, converse, communicate, that is, the quality of their being together and constructing social networks. Analogously, equally important are the psychological networks, transpersonal processes that are simultaneously internal and external and fundamental to the person. They are in fact the meeting point of the internal groups that are in the mind and on which the mind rests: this is a very profound reality which structures identities. In fact, the individual

³³ The unidirectional conferring of power to the family institution, accompanied by the unconscious identification of its members with it, creates a particular intrapsychic structure called "hypertrophic-ego", which, in turn, coincides with the projection on the environmental reality of the "omnipotent family We". It is through the grandiose "hypertrophic-ego" that the individual relates with reality, concealing however his insecurity or also the weakness of the I totally subjugated to the power of the family. To avoid the distress of relating to an unknown "We" that does not receive the same reassuring meaning as the "family We", the I seeks or participates in the creation of organizational cultures resembling that of the family (Fiore, 1998).

³⁴ From the group-analytical standpoint, the family has been, in the course of time, the only place of protection and reassurance. Very probably this characteristic can be found in the history of Sicily, which has given the family the task of shouldering the burden of the primary needs of the group, becoming a protective, reassuring nest faced with a society that is changeable, and constantly felt as being dangerous, destructive and disinterested. The characteristic of the Sicilian family is therefore that of being structured on the defence/protection against the presence of multiple "transpersonal institutional thoughts", introduced by the constant domination suffered. Dealing with the need for protection, it has been transformed into the only possible "organization-institution" able to represent the Sicilian identity and ensure its continuity over time (Fiore, 1998).

³⁵ The family, in Sicily, is a relational good when it intervenes for instance affectively and economically, in support of one of its members that has lost his job, when one of the members intends to start a business activity, etc.

³⁶ The context, in the group-analytical sense, is seen as the relational, emotive, cognitive-affective worlds that live in it, co-influence it, give it meaning.

personality is constructed within matrixes, transpersonal relational networks that cut across the single subjects, connecting them in collective dimensions, according to registers that at the same time involve cognitive, emotive, mental and corporeal, conscious and unconscious levels (Napolitani, 1987).

The human being, as we have already said, lives constantly immersed in a group relational network. The birth and development of psychic life, of its health and its sufferance, are tied to relational experience, firstly of the family and then of the group in a broad sense, and to the way each person fantasizes it, represents it to himself, re-elaborates it. For groupanalysis³⁷ the relationship is the tool for change: that is, it has a therapeutic and transformational value³⁸. This also means that, by its nature, psychotherapeutic work is substantially anti-fundamentalist³⁹. Both the current, communicative relationship and that within the patient, is the heart of psychotherapeutic treatment. This can also be called a relational process which, through the relationships of the clinical setting, intervenes on the patients' internal relational world. The difference is therefore a value and an experience that helps psychic life, and cultural life, to grow (Lo Verso & Prestano, 2006).

In Sicily, essentially, the development of the person and the change of the economic "culture" must necessarily coincide with the substitution of the saturated and saturating "mafia-We" and "family-We", with a "We" that valorizes difference and its subjective, emotional, relational and community foundations as wealth (Lo Verso, 2005). This is a solid, community-oriented "We" that makes it possible to look at people with their needs and desires, that through the relationship, enables the development of subjectivity and autonomy, and allows difference to be shared, encountered and and experienced as wealth: that is, able to make relational goods emerge.

7. The group as tool for development

Group-analytical elaboration has provided important and innovative scientific contributions linked to the clinical-social practice of groups (Di Maria & Lo Verso, 1995). The clinical-dynamic group, in fact, both in treatment and in the psychosocial intervention, has become one of the main working tools used⁴⁰ and one of the greatest potentialities of clinical psychology (Di Maria & Lo Verso, 2002). Moreover, in the last few decades, research into groups has developed and refined its techniques to deal with fields once inaccessible for traditional methodological approaches.

The group, according to Lo Verso (2004), should be considered and conceived as an identificatory anthropological network that has fundamentally the character of multiplicity and complexity, and that involves the whole history of every subject, concerning the affective meanings reached and elaborated by each person in relation to the anthropo-relational environment where they developed.

In this direction, if it is scientifically conceived and grounded, the group becomes a tool of dialogue, relation and care, and of growth of the Self in relation to the Other person. It is in fact a place where relational experience can be tried out fully and authentically if the analyst manages to promote this, seeing that the psychopathological symptoms usually prevent it. Today there is an infinite potential number of groups through which to operate: small groups, short term groups, monosymptomatic groups, groups for children, groups in institutional and community contexts (Lo Verso & Prestano, 2006).

³⁷ The prefix 'group' in the term group-analysis refers to the term of internal groupality which is relevant to the Foulkesian concept of matrix; this implies that this analytical practice is not tied to a group setting, since the analysis of internal groupality can equally be carried out both in a group context and in a dual context.

³⁸ Besides groupanalysis, naturally, many other psychological treatments of different orientations "use" relations and the group, to help people to overcome pain and psychic suffering.

³⁹ It is no coincidence that in all dictatorships, totalitarian regimes and false democracies, groups and all forms of human aggregation, were and are prohibited. This lets us understand that the group, also in Sicily, is a social dimension that evokes fears of change and fear of destabilization.

⁴⁰ The group is also a "sustainable" tool in the sense that the monetary cost of group therapy, just as successful as individual therapy, is decidedly less expensive and more productive both for the individual and for society.

Furthermore, not only is group intervention effective in treating psychic disorders (Di Nuovo & Lo Verso, 2005), but also in other areas of application of the social world: education, training, assessment, community development, psycho-social interventions, organizational intervention, etc. (Lo Verso & Raia, 1998; Pezzoli, 2006).

In Sicily, inspired by the recent experiences of psychotherapy and/or psychological help to people close to mafia circles⁴¹ and using a lot of other empirical research data, prof. Girolamo Lo Verso's research team has started to use a particular group format, the psychodynamically run elaboration group, in some intervention-research on subjective experiences with the mafia phenomenon. Specifically, this group format was first used a few years ago as a tool of intervention-research, in the project: "*Beyond the Mafia Mentality: culture, identity, psychology of a fundamentalism*", carried out in a small town in western Sicily⁴². Since then, with a constant "thinking about it" (Lo Verso, 2004), it has been increasingly used in subsequent intervention research⁴³. The psychodynamically run elaboration group,

"enables the mafia phenomenon to be observed not only on a cognitive but also on an affective plane, making it possible, through the guidance and supervision of the psychotherapists, to consider the emotional dimension of the experiences, favouring a profound contact with the mafia mentality in which the differences can start to be distinguished, to the great benefit of the group members. It is an investigative tool and a tool of change as soon as it is applied. It can become, and in part it is already, a tool for the collection of information and the development of resources on the part of the participants, and of all those Sicilians who want to look into the similarities with the mafia, recognising it inside themselves, to cast light on aspects that perhaps, the longer they are hidden, the more obscure they become, leading to increased confusion about what belongs to me as a Sicilian

⁴¹ In the last few years, in confirmation of the partial crisis of Cosa Nostra, there has unexpectedly emerged from the psychiatric services, mental health services and psychotherapy practices, a brand new relationship between psychotherapy and the mafia phenomenon. It is a recent fact that mafia family-members (above all the wives and children, but not the mafia men) are to be found in private psychotherapy practices. The request for psychotherapy is in itself a violation of mafia rules. It can in fact open the person to the experience of a different, authentic relationship that can create possibilities of growth and autonomy. In psychotherapy with mafia family-members, still tied to their origins, argues Lo Verso (1999), the *setting* is very special and not clearly defined, and the countertransference at times assumes the characteristics of a fairytale or mythology, given that the therapist and patient may have the persecutory experience of being observed by mafia families, fearing the possible reactions. Cosa Nostra is a real, determining presence which has to be reckoned with and in whose mechanisms one risks becoming entangled. Another clinically important factor is the presence of co-transference elements (Lo Verso, 1989, 1994), since in the therapeutic process there are no projections of the patient onto the therapist, but there is the co-presence of strictly personal elements of the therapist, born and bred in Sicily, always in close contact with mafia psychism and mafia culture, therefore with his affective, symbolic and phantasmatic baggage. Moreover the analytical codes seem to 'break down' because there is the strong interference of elements of reality. The patient says she has not seen her father for a month and fears he has been killed: the therapist could elaborate this, erroneously, as persecutory experience, while in fact the father really has been killed. Naturally, in the clinical situation, the interference of elements of reality does not only concern the mafia, but is systematically present.

⁴² On that occasion, at the beginning of the groups, the participants often said they had never directly seen the mafia, almost casting doubt on its very existence. Then, suddenly after a few meetings, the mafia emerged, becoming visible: they remembered episodes, happenings, precise facts. Essentially, research data seems to indicate that in people the subject of "not to be talked about" has a very strong resonance when the mafia is dealing with its own story, its own identity, its own inner world: access to the Self seems to be precluded. This is an unconscious intrapsychic block, not in the superficial levels of the psychological structure, but at the most primitive and archaic mental levels. Managing to get around this block and put into words the complicated web of inhibiting emotive and cognitive constraints is not an easy matter.

⁴³ The psychodynamically run elaboration group was also used as an intervention-research tool in the PRIN-2004 project: "*How the mafia thinks: Relations, autonomies and dependencies in the mind of the men of 'Cosa Nostra'. Clinical-social depth-studies and models for change*". In this case, too, the research data, including the not infrequent refusals to participate in the groups, which resulted in not being able to hold them in the co-financing municipalities, seems to indicate that ordinary, respectable people express psychological distress precisely when they are confronted by the mafia in its psychological, cultural, social and anthropological dimensions.

rather than as a vehicle of the mafia mentality, not allowing that distinction that is so vital for our area, our culture, our identity” (Giunta, 2006, Unpublished manuscript).

Essentially, through the possibility of observing one’s own psychic and affective dynamics, thinking of one’s own story and that of Others in a different way, the psychodynamically run elaboration group, is a fundamental transformational experience for going beyond the “mafia mentality” in Sicily. Moreover, like other forms of adequately structured and conducted groups, thanks to its great transformational potential, its being the place of reciprocal relationality, and to the particular psychological-relational dynamics that develop there, it is potentially able, in the long-term, to develop and bring out relational goods⁴⁴ which, by their very nature, have a profound effect on social functioning and greatly influence economic development.

In this precise direction, in confirmation of what has been argued, the clinical-social experience, not only in Sicily, clearly shows how much the groups and relating can contribute to that process of cognitive, relational and evolutive growth that must necessarily accompany economic and technological development, and therefore create optimal conditions for a successful development of individual and group resources and those of the whole community, whatever kind it may be. It is no coincidence, in fact, that the group and relational goods are “invariable” foundations for the good functioning of microcredit⁴⁵, found worldwide⁴⁶ and also strong in Italy⁴⁷, a phenomenon entailing a close interaction between psychological-relational and socio-economic dimensions.

Microcredit is essentially a process that, through group relations, creates a ‘virtuous circle’ of tangible and intangible goods, that is, a process where, starting from an intangible good, trust, tangible goods are developed which in turn create self-esteem, another intangible good that develops risk-taking capacity, which in turn creates further resources. In this way one leaves the vicious circle of poverty and enters the virtuous circle of productivity. The fundamental element for the success of microcredit is therefore the presence of a group. The group, argues Brunori (2004), is fundamental for various reasons: firstly, it is an element of socialization for people who are often emarginated, secondly, it can contain the anxieties that emerge from the attempt to change one’s

⁴⁴ On this, it is important to remember that prof. Rizzolatti (2006) of the University of Parma, discovered the function of the *mirror* neurone, i.e. the genetic factor underlying the ability to imitate, fundamental in establishing an interpersonal relationship. Essentially, good relations, relational goods, carve out new cerebral connections.

⁴⁵ Microcredit (Yunus, 2006), is a tool to develop the potential of social outsiders and to recuperate the weak sectors of the population. Through small loans given on trust, people are given the chance to recover the capacity to look after themselves, both economically and from the point of view of personal and social relations.

⁴⁶ Thanks to Yunus, microcredit has spread all over the world, especially in developing countries, both in rural and in urban settings. 1976 saw the creation of “Greener” Bank, today the fifth bank in Bangladesh, whose success is based on a system of credit to the poor, purely on trust. Every year the bank collects about a billion dollars, three quarters of which are reinvested in new projects. Six million destitute people (95 per cent women) spread around 38 thousand Bengali villages have benefited from the loans, with a repayment rate of 99%. 54% of the bank’s customers rises above the poverty line within five years, the rest within ten years: outstanding results. Some economists and others have claimed that the Yunus model would not be applicable in developed countries, a hypothesis that was immediately disproven. In Norway, a very rich country economically but with a high suicide rate, microcredit is today highly developed. Norway is very poor in relating, and the relationship has been and still is the pillar for the development of microcredit not only in Norway but also in other places around the world.

⁴⁷ In Italy, there are numerous experiences of microcredit, some of which have unfortunately failed probably due to the failure to use the group. On the other hand, among the experiences that have succeeded, thanks to the use of the group as in the original Yunus model, there is that of the Association for the development of microfinancing in Bologna (Micro.Bo), created in the University “*Alma Mater*”, in September 2004 in an initiative by prof. Luisa Brunori, full professor of Group Psychology. Micro.Bo, has so far contacted 170 potential beneficiaries, 52 of whom have created 15 groups and 31 micro-businesses have been financed. Most of the activities are in the sales, handcrafts and services sectors. The total loans amount to 279 thousand euro while the single loan goes from 6 thousand to 10 thousand euro. The repayment rate is 100%. Today, from the Micro.Bo experience, a microcredit initiative on a larger scale is being organized through the work of prof. Luisa Brunori, Marco D’Alema and Raffaele Barone. In this direction, the Agency of Integrated Development s.p.a. (ASI) of Calatino – Sicily, has already started a course of specialization on “Microcredit and Development” in the local area. (www.kalat.net).

status, thirdly they enable the social contents of the relationship to be re-elaborated and the internal/external individual/group dialectic to be re-formulated, so as to make individuals responsible because the success of the group depends on their success and vice versa. The microcredit group is essentially characterized by cooperation and reciprocity, that is, by the relational modality from which relational goods emerge, both allowing people to develop and to have the concrete possibility of being the protagonist of themselves, also in the economic sense.

8. Conclusions

Today the large amount of important knowledge acquired on the mafia phenomenon enables us to design, from a psychological standpoint, practical tools for intervention and change in Sicily. In spite of this, in order to obtain better, more far-reaching results, these tools need to intersect and collaborate with the tools of other disciplines. Essentially, it is necessary for the different disciplinary competences to find concrete collaboration within a boarder common project of local development⁴⁸. Naturally, at least a part of the Sicilian political-economic powers must want this.

The local development paradigm springs firstly from the need to respond to world-wide changes⁴⁹, to create adequate criteria of the sustainability⁵⁰ of interventions, to activate, from the very beginning, the participation of the community involved in decision-making, and from the fact that economic growth is an important goal, but not the only one.

The literature on local development shows the growing importance of the local area as a place of re-elaboration of the policies drawn up at the central level⁵¹. Accepting the concept of territoriality in development changes the way of seeing the latter: its characteristics are no longer to be found in linear logic or in the classical economics principles and methods. Its characteristics lie precisely in the specificity of the different contexts: shared and consolidated norms and social customs, deeply rooted organizations (*no-profit* and *profit-making*, various kinds of associationism, interest groups, but also mafia organizations), environmental features, the quality of local institutions, networks⁵², the quality of the relational fabric (relational goods), anthropo-psychic dimensions, the integration of socio-cultural and economic factors. These features are considered fundamental premises for the success of a local development programme (Storper, 1997).

A community that establishes solid relations and develops relational goods, that constructs bonds of belonging and reciprocal trust, an adequate sense of community and an improvement of the quality of life, is fundamentally based on the principle of social capital⁵³. The latter, seen as a complex fact within which relational goods seem to be a fundamental element, is both an essential prerequisite and is at the same time produced by effective local development. Relational goods are also able to qualitatively and quantitatively raise the level of trust in the community. Trust is a crucial resource for development.

⁴⁸ The scientific literature on local development is very vast and examining it is obviously outside the scope of this article. Here we will record the definition of Bonomi (1998), which says it is the overall development of a competitive territorial system, in which local governments play an active role as driving force and regulator, through the use of innovative tools and the monitoring of outcomes.

⁴⁹ That is, from the need to pay special attention to the g-local difficulties. The term "glocal" refers to the combination of the global and the local, where the first does not subjugate, flatten or weaken the second, but the two elements change reciprocally, giving rise to a new compound. Glocalism is a more complex vision than globalization, a phenomenon that so far has only been considered in its economic aspects, unjustly leaving out its social and cultural aspects.

⁵⁰ By sustainability is meant the achievement of world socio-economic growth within the limits of the earth's ecological possibilities, without compromising its capacity to satisfy the needs of future generations.

⁵¹ Following numerous radical institutional reforms, the local autonomies have taken a fundamental strategic role concerning their own socio-economic growth, precisely because the access to European funding, to the tools of Negotiated Planning (Territorial Planning Pacts, Neighbourhood Contracts) call for the adoption of a new model of governance.

⁵² Networks are the unforeseeable result of complex relations between people, between groups of people and between the person and the groups. The levels of interdependence concern relations that have both a material and an immaterial connotation.

⁵³ Putnam (1993) defines social capital as those aspects of social life, networks, norms and trust, that qualify the participants to act together in a more effective way in pursuit of shared goals.

In the funding programme of the European Union 2007–2013, Sicily was again classed as Objective 1⁵⁴. In the National Strategic Framework 2007-2013, the issues of safety and legality are examined in Priority 5: “Social inclusion and services for quality of life and territorial enhancement”. Given that these issues are part of normal politics, the Sicilian Region should actually have extra powers, so as to reinforce the effects of national policies, through specific initiatives and practices with clear territorial purposes, designed and carried out with the broadest involvement of the area’s social actors and for this reason capable of achieving the required integration. More specifically, Priority 5 establishes a specific objective for safety in the Regions, that is, to guarantee citizens and businesses better safety conditions, contributing to the requalification of contexts characterized by more serious and pervasive criminal phenomena (National Strategic Framework 2007-2013). The same programmatic document, in view of the not sufficiently positive results attained in the period 2000–2006 in the context of the Strategic Community Framework Objective 1, recalls the need for a vigorous “discontinuity in the approach to regional policies on safety, which must translate into the ability to identify actions and interventions with a strong local flavour, designed for specific opportunities and development processes and in close connection with the other priorities of the Framework” (National Strategic Framework 2007-2013).

Essentially, on the issue of safety, Sicily has been delegated with the interventions needed to improve the conditions and the characteristics of the local context. In the National Strategic Framework 2007-2013, in fact, once the marked presence of organized crime in the Objective 1 regions is underlined, the document stresses the strategic importance, but also the necessity, for resources and interventions to converge in these particular contexts, also suggesting some precise planning directions expressed in the Strategic Document for the South.

This document, in the section “Legality, safety and the fight against the activities of organized crime”, recalls some of the guidelines that should steer the action of future Regional Operative Programmes (POR). The document says that “there are specific actions to take in a shared way that can be achieved in development policies, both for direct promotion of practices of legality and respect for the laws, and in the progressively clearer and more transparent modalities with which the interventions should be globally carried out” (Documento Strategico per il Mezzogiorno).

In Sicily, essentially, a five-year local development programme (‘National Strategic Framework 2007–2013’), must necessarily go beyond the normal in order to be successful. In other words, there must be a political action that can combine the action of repressing the mafia with equally important actions of development of the people and the whole community.

In concrete terms, it might be useful to think of creating actual “Workshops for Local Development”, through which to actually build, and seriously establish a programme for the development of the local area. The cycle of seminars⁵⁵ “Interactions and Social Networks in Sustainable, Participatory

⁵⁴ The European Union, through structural funding, intends to promote harmonious, balanced and lasting development of economic activities, employment and human resources, legality, environmental protection and improvement, the elimination of inequalities and the promotion of equal opportunity between men and women. The general principle of economic and social cohesion is contained in the Treaty of Amsterdam and in article 1 of the general Regulations on structural funds. Interventions of economic and social cohesion policies are planned over a period of many years for all the regions of member States, with the focus on the less advanced in order to favour their structural adaptation. For Sicily no longer being Objective 1 means having overcome many social and historical dramas, and infrastructural and entrepreneurial deficiencies.

⁵⁵ Encouraged by the positive experience of the ASI of the Calatino area – Sicily, the cycle of seminars was then promoted also by the “Laboratory of Anthropological Research for the Analysis of the Local area and of Local Potential”, by the “Department of Sociology and Communication of the ‘Sapienza’ University of Rome”; and by the ‘Associazione Novagorà’ of Frascati. It enjoys the patronage of the Ministry of Health, of the Department of Sociology and Communication of the ‘Sapienza’ University of Rome, of the Provincial Authorities of Rome, of the Municipal authorities of Monteporzio, Frascati, Ariccia, of the ‘XI Comunità Montana del Lazio’, and of the General Direction of the RM/H Health Service. In charge of the course are prof. Paolo Palmeri, Marco D’Alema, Giuseppe Licari and Raffaele Barone. The cycle of seminars has the goal of providing a flow of information and knowledge about sustainable, participatory local development, as well as of creating a network of *opinion leaders* so as to strengthen the relations between the local actors and between the latter and the operative context in which they reside. The project also aims to prompt reflection on the development of legality and on the Development of businesses through the valorization of local human resources. Lastly, it places emphasis on good practice in local development and on the managing of globalization.

Local Development” promoted by the Agency for the Integrated Growth of the Calatino area – Sicily, is probably the right direction in which to start thinking how to build these “Workshops for Local Development” and to get them working in the local area. Within them, an important contribution in terms of scientific consultancy, research and innovation could also be made by a highly-qualified “Interdisciplinary Scientific Centre for Local Development”, which would take the form of a meeting point and crossroads for the various disciplines (humanistic, economic, scientific, *etc.*) and areas of research into local development.

Naturally the creation of “Workshops for Local Development” is possible only through an awareness and a regional and local political action that is profoundly different from the current one. What is needed therefore is a development of politics and a political development.

One important component of political development is “anthropological federalism” (Gangemi, 1994), identified as a success factor in the growth of North-East Italy. The “anthropological federalism” discourse, which is diametrically opposed to that of “territorial federalism”, goes back to stressing the importance of the person and of relational goods for development. This term, in fact, means

“that mental attitude that is indispensable in achieving various goals: a) to make the individual independent, autonomous and capable of initiative (not as the mere development of one’s individual personality considered separately, but as the development of one’s sociality, of one’s ability to produce confidence, that is, social capital, and of one’s capacity to learn by interacting); b) to construct autonomous communities and consequently also to strengthen what is today called civil society and produce what is called local democracy [...] and what could be called ‘networking democracy’, that is, the type of relationships that develops through interactions presupposing the equality of the parties (in this sense networks are said to be horizontal) [...] c) to consider as secondary the divisions resulting from the great cleavages, that is, the great ideological divisions [...] d) to always consider that the norm and the command or any other practice [...] are not, alone, enough to produce obedience because it is necessary to have a culture that predisposes to the acceptance of the norm or the command (which is produced by history, tradition, public feeling, world-views, *etc.*)” (Gangemi, 2006, pp.120-121)

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