Order and Crime: Criminal Groups´ Political Legitimacy in Michoacán and Sicily
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Propositions

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1. As embedded agents in society, criminal groups will look for political legitimacy to take shape in the local social context when this is under dispute.

2. In terms of political legitimacy, the case of Michoacán shows a continuum between La Familia Michoacana and Los Caballeros Templarios. That continuation exhibits an increase in the intensity and frequency of the legitimacy seeking efforts. In the beginning, the general legitimation discourse had elements of political modernity and eventually became mixed with pre-modern and post-modern attributes.

3. The Cosa Nostra has historically participated in shaping the Sicilian social order through both contingent and systematic legitimacy practices. Rather than a counter-society, from a political legitimacy perspective, the Sicilian mafia has shaped local social conditions that have historically faced more or less resistance from other political agents.

4. Whereas in Michoacán, the over-exposure of the local criminal groups produced intense and visible, material and non-material legitimacy sources, the shadowy presence of Cosa Nostra produced pre-dominantly non-material legitimacy sources. Whereas the first case continued to engage in a legitimation process, and thus required visibility, the second held long periods of authority.

5. The debate on the political legitimacy concept could be divided into normative and descriptive perspectives. The first category describes what legitimate power should be, the second addresses what is it, both form part of the operational definition.

6. Following the descriptive perspective, political legitimacy understandings need to take into account five considerations: the ruler and the ruled; the contingency of how legitimacy is built; the hypothetical parallel legitimate authorities' coexistence; the history of the legitimacy building process; and the perpetual necessity of the legitimate political actor to reconfirm itself and its legitimacy.

7. The existence of a conflictive authority-building process is not a synonym for social disorder. The social order exists as a consequence of the interactions of several legal and illegal actors.

8. No legitimacy related clashes take place outside that authority-building process, while no authority disputes exclude the usage of legitimacy. By doing so, social agents are primarily political, and for the criminal groups, the condition of

illegality becomes an extra relevant element shaping the phenomenon. Therefore, criminal groups struggling for legitimacy do not eliminate the authority-building process; instead, it becomes reaffirmed.

9. For criminal groups, legitimacy is an instrument, i.e., a tool to participate in the definition of the local social order. Understanding this can lead to devising and improving measures toward undermining their authority and reducing criminal violence in societies suffering from this problem.