

To Pay or Not to Pay? Dynamic Transparency and the Fight Against the Mafia's Extortionists

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Abstract This article presents the results of the longitudinal study of Addiopizzo, a successful anti-bribery organization founded in Sicily in 2004. It analyzes how this organization has used information disclosure as a strategy to fight adverse environmental conditions and the immoral activities of the Sicilian Mafia. This article extends the business ethics and corporate social responsibility literature by showing how multi-level strategic information disclosure processes can help gain organizational legitimacy in adverse social environments and successfully fight against social resistance to change, low levels of moral imagination and attacks from criminal organizations. This article provides an additional contribution to the literature by linking the three research streams on corporate transparency, the fight against corruption, and organizational legitimacy. The results of this research also contribute to the special issue of the EBEN AC 2010, “Which values for which organizations”, since it provides a unique example of an organization capable of spreading the values of social justice and honesty in a difficult social environment plagued by Mafia.

Keywords Corruption · Transparency · Legitimacy

Introduction

The subject of corruption is attracting the interest of a growing number of managers, policy makers and scholars (see Hess and Dunfee 2000; Dunfee and Hess 2001; Bower and Gilson 2003; Argandoña 2007; Nwabuzor 2005; Hess 2009). This greater attention is probably driven by the dramatic socio-economic effects of corruption: It results in resources being used ineffectively, increased input and output costs for firms, and more generally, a distortion of normal market mechanisms (see Argandoña 2000). Despite the wide condemnation of corruption, its occurrence is widespread and current government and multinational policies designed to curb it appear to be ineffective (Hess 2009).

Following the seminal works of Argandoña (2000, 2001, 2003a, 2007) and Dunfee and Hess (Hess and Dunfee 2000, 2003; Dunfee and Hess 2001), the literature on business ethics and corporate social responsibility (CSR) is focusing on corruption-related issues such as anti-corruption policies being adopted in the public sector (Hess 2009), corruption indexes to rank countries (Warren and Laufer 2009), different perceptions of bribery and ethical behavior (Sanchez et al. 2008; Bernardi et al. 2009), the role of the firm in the fight against corruption (Calderon et al. 2009), etc. It should be noted that empirical research in this field focuses mainly on analysis and discussion of extensive quantitative data, gathered via questionnaires or from indirect sources (see Nwabuzor 2005). It is understandable that gathering data on criminal activities in the field is extremely difficult and, in some cases, could be dangerous (see Gambetta 1993). As a consequence there are very few micro-level studies on corruption, and little is known about how low-level institutions such as NGOs and social movements can be helpful in the fight against corruption. By the same

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token, normative studies mainly analyze and propose policies that focus on high-level institutions such as governments or multinational companies.

This article contributes to filling this gap by presenting a longitudinal analysis of Addiopizzo, a successful anti-extortion initiative established in Sicily in 2004 by a group of seven young people. Addiopizzo currently has around 10,000 affiliated consumers, 500 affiliated firms and a very active network of supporters. This study relies on an extensive database (35 interviews, 90 press releases, 18 reports by anti-Mafia governmental institutions, 90 articles from magazines and newspapers, 38 stickers and banners, and 79 internal documents) to address two main issues. The first is related to the difficulties encountered by the Addiopizzo initiative in performing its anti-extortion activities. The second concerns Addiopizzo's strategic use of information disclosure in the fight against the adverse socio-economic environment.

This study makes at least five contributions to the corruption, business ethics, and CSR literature. First, it extends anti-corruption studies (see Argandoña 2000, 2003b, 2007; Hess 2009) by providing a detailed, micro-level longitudinal analysis of a successful low-level anti-extortion initiative. Second, it contributes to the literature on transparency (Vaccaro and Madsen 2009a; Vaccaro and Patino Echeverri 2010) in identifying a series of strategic information disclosure processes, which we refer to as "strategic transparency", that provide leverage for organizations to address the threats emanating from adverse socio-economic environments. Third, this article illustrates the impact of strategic information disclosure on organizational legitimacy (Stinchcombe 1965; Ashforth and Gibbs 1990). Fourth, it extends the literature on the Mafia (e.g., Gambetta 1993; Orlando 2001; Paoli 2007), and the related declinations in CSR research (see Gond et al. 2009) in presenting the case of an organization that is successfully fighting the Mafia in both the business and, even more importantly, in the socio-cultural dimensions. Finally, this article links the corruption, literature on organizational transparency and organizational legitimacy and opens new perspectives for further inter-disciplinary research.

The article is organized as follows. "Corruption and Anti-Corruption in Business Ethics and CSR Research" section reviews the related literature and posits the two research questions. "Research Methodology" section discusses the research methodology and the empirical data. "Results" section presents the results, while "Discussion and Contributions to the Literature" section discusses this study's contributions to the literature. "Perspectives for Further Research" section proposes some possible perspectives for future research. Finally, the conclusions of this work are presented.

Corruption and Anti-Corruption in Business Ethics and CSR Research

As mentioned above, there is an extensive and mature body of work on corruption in the business ethics and CSR literature. The first issue of *Journal of Business Ethics* presented a study by Elliston (1982) on whistleblowing as a form of civil dissent. Since then, a variety of empirical and theoretical studies on corruption-related issues have been published in top journals in the field.

Although this study is not intended to provide a comprehensive review of the corruption literature, it is necessary to introduce a simple taxonomy of the studies that have been carried out on this issue. The research on corruption can be grouped in three broad categories. The first category draws on information from extensive surveys and macro-data on socio-economic systems (see Hess and Dunfee 2000) and discusses anti-corruption policies (Hess and Dunfee 2000; Hess 2009). The second, theoretical in nature, concerns the ethical nature and implications of corruption (see Argandoña 2001, 2003a, b). The third is related to individual perceptions about corruption, and differences across geographical areas (see Bernardi et al. 2009).

The existing empirical work in the first category generally focuses on questionnaires (see Baughn et al. 2010) or laboratory experiments (see Gino and Pierce 2009). Policies and normative indications generally follow this pattern: They propose top-down solutions to be applied by governments and multinational companies, or focus on the decision-making processes of individual managers and other critical actors. For example, Hess (2009) proposes a five-step anti-corruption policy for public institutions which is centered on amnesty programs, corporate monitoring, expansion of the definition of corruption, development of more reliable indications and multi-stakeholder initiatives. A complementary approach is presented by Melé (2009), which provides normative indications for individual managers and professionals for making decisions related to conflicts of interest, insider trading and whistle-blowing.

Thus, the anti-corruption debate has become polarized through discussion of the role possibly played by governments and firms, on the one hand, and by ethically motivated managers, on the other hand (Calderon et al. 2009), and overlooks the critical role of intermediary institutions, such as not-for-profit and consumers' associations, in the fight against corruption. Several scholars and policy makers highlight the potentialities of these institutions for supporting effective anti-corruption initiatives (see Paoli 2007). Also, since the beginning of 2000, several local anti-corruption organizations have emerged as the result of initiatives by individuals or small groups of citizens:

EGJustice in Guinea Bissau, “Youth-driven Mjaft!” in Albania founded in 2003, Ocasa in Colombia founded in 2006, Shayfeen founded by a group of Colombian women in 2005, etc. However, the very few studies that have explored these initiatives focused on very specific issues such as the role of politics in the fight against the Mafia (Orlando 2001), how political consumerism can be incorporated by anti-Mafia movements, or how Sicilian civil society perceived anti-Mafia groups (Ramella and Trigilia 1997; Jamieson 2000).

The state of the art lacks exploratory analyses and taxonomies of the difficulties, threats, and resistance encountered by low-level (Elster 1990; Vaccaro and Madsen 2009a), anti-corruption initiatives. For example, promoting anti-extortion initiatives in areas rife with Mafia-style organizations can be expected to ignite the flames of violence among extorters (see Gambetta 1993, pp. 40–43). Similarly, breaking with established norms can be expected to be met with social resistance (see Piderit 2000). This study tries to fill this gap in the literature by addressing the following research question: What are the main difficulties that low-level anti-corruption initiatives face in launching and developing their activities?

It should be noted that little is known about the policies that low-level anti-corruption institutions can adopt to fight adverse environments and pursue their goals. For example, resource scarcity is a serious problem for many organizations that rely on the part-time support of volunteers, and on very poor infrastructures (see Battilana et al. 2009). In this context, transparency would seem to play a major role. Transparency, intended as the process of disclosing information to civil society (Fung et al. 2007; Vaccaro and Madsen 2009a; Vaccaro and Patino Echeverri 2010), is often mentioned as an important strategy in the fight against corruption that can be successfully used by NGOs and other low-level organizations because it requires neither costly infrastructures nor large organizational efforts (see Transparency International 2008). Indeed, to increase transparency, all this required is a person with average computing skills, a server and a reliable Internet connection (Vaccaro and Madsen 2009b). However, little is known about how information disclosure can help low-level institutions change corrupt socio-economic systems and fight against criminal organizations. Previous research has analyzed the impact of top-down transparency initiatives in the fight against corruption (see Fung et al. 2007), but there is a dearth of studies on how information disclosure can help low-level institutions fight against corrupted socio-economic systems and criminal organizations. Thus, the second research question addressed in this article is: How can information disclosure processes be used by low-level anti-corruption institutions to fight adverse socio-economic environments?

Research Methodology

Our methodological approach follows the tradition of interpretative longitudinal case studies (see Vaast and Levina 2006). Qualitative and quantitative data were collected from various sources, i.e., Anti-Mafia Police (Nucleo Investigativo Antimafia) and anti-Mafia court (Direzione Investigativa Antimafia) reports, reports and press releases from Addiopizzo, articles from newspapers and magazines published in Sicily, and in Italy generally, interviews with Addiopizzo members and stakeholders, direct observation of Addiopizzo’s activities (in the headquarters and in the field), films made by activists describing initiatives organized by Addiopizzo, etc. Table 1 reports the data sources, the kinds of information, and numbers of documents acquired from each source.

We adopted a three-step, recursive, theoretical sampling strategy to focus our analysis and avoid a “data asphyxia” effect (Eisenhardt 1989). In the first step, we reviewed the recent literature on Mafia and anti-Mafia. We analyzed the academic literature (see Gambetta 1993, 2009) and documents from Sicilian journalists and experts on the Mafia (see Patroni Griffi; 1994; Orlando 2001; Lodato 2006, 2007). This provided detailed preliminary information on the Mafia movement, its history, and its impact on Sicilian civil society. We then turned to publicly available data, such as newspapers and magazine articles and official communications from Addiopizzo. We obtained and analyzed several reports from important government anti-Mafia organizations such as the Italian Anti-Mafia Police (Direzione Investigativa Antimafia) and the Anti-Mafia Supreme Court (Direzione Nazionale Antimafia). This second step provided us more specific information about the activities undertaken by Addiopizzo, its founders, supporters, affiliates, etc., and its impact on civil society. The third stage of our data gathering included semi-structured interviews with police investigators and magistrates specialized in the fight against Mafia and collecting specific documents from them.

Our strategy of theoretical sampling was iterative. From the data analysis (described below) conducted after each data-gathering session, we were able to identify further information to be collected. For example, when we began to analyze Addiopizzo press releases, we discovered that we lacked knowledge about some of the tactics used by Mafia families to bribe firms; we extended our literature review (step 1) with the addition of some books about specific Mafia extortion strategies (see Gambetta 1993; Orlando 2001). Similarly, the information obtained from the preliminary interviews highlighted that we needed to make a closer examination of the information available on some anti-racket association portals affiliated with Addiopizzo. Data gathering related to particular phenomena was

Table 1 Data sources

Data source	Reference	Kinds of information acquired
Articles from local newspapers and magazines (excluding press releases)	D1–D90	(a) Information disclosed by Addiopizzo through newspapers and magazines (b) Reactions of the local population concerning Addiopizzo's initiatives
Addiopizzo press releases	D300–D393	(a) Information disclosed by Addiopizzo about its activities, other anti-Mafia initiatives and relevant facts about Sicily and Mafia-related situations
Documents of anti-Mafia institutions (Direzione Investigativa Antimafia, etc.)	D997–D1014	(a) Mafia activities, its connections and ramifications in the Sicilian socio-economic system (b) Attacks against organized anti-Mafia activists and entrepreneurs (c) Activities conducted by Addiopizzo and their impact on civil society
Interviews (semi-structured)	D1–D15	(a) General information and history of Addiopizzo (b) Perceived threats by Addiopizzo's members and supporters (c) Intentions and objectives associated with information disclosure processes
Interviews (focused)	D16–D26 DV1–DV10	(a) General information and history of Addiopizzo (b) Perceived threats by Addiopizzo's members and supporters (c) Intentions and objectives associated with information disclosure processes
Video-interviews	D1001–D1005	(a) General information and history of Addiopizzo (b) Perceived threats by Addiopizzo's members and other relevant stakeholders (c) Intentions and objectives associated with information disclosure processes
Stickers (<i>Pizzini</i>) and banners	D1522–D1540	(a) Messages and indications conveyed to civil society to fight against the Mafia
Website	DW1–DW50	Information disclosed by Addiopizzo about its activities, other anti-Mafia initiatives and relevant facts about Sicily and Mafia-related situations
Internal documents	ID1–ID79	(a) General information and history of Addiopizzo (b) Perceived threats by Addiopizzo's members and other relevant stakeholders (c) Intentions and objectives associated with information disclosure processes (d) Activities conducted by Addiopizzo and their impact on civil society

suspended if successive enquiries (i.e., interviews and direct observation) provided no additional relevant information and confirmed the information already acquired (Yin 1994).

We adopted a two-step coding procedure to analyze the empirical data. First, we conducted a descriptive coding which identified important theoretical categories (Miles and Hubermann 1994). For example, the preliminary interviews showed that Addiopizzo's members considered information disclosure to be an important activity for achieving legitimacy (see I21; I23). This highlighted the issues of organizational transparency (Vaccaro and Madsen 2009a; Turilli and Floridi 2009; Vaccaro and Patino Echeverri 2010) and organizational legitimacy (Suchman 1995). Some 15 variables emerged during the analysis of initial interviews and preliminary documents. Following the methodological literature (see Merton et al. 1990; Miles and Hubermann 1994), we retained only those whose relevance was confirmed in the focused interviews and internal documentation such as in-house reports and e-mails. For example, an open interview indicated that Addiopizzo members used the strategy of anonymity as a safety measure, but further investigation showed that the names, and in some cases, the faces of Addiopizzo members were publicly available. By the same token, some preliminary interviews led to the identification of two constructs of the institutional

entrepreneurship literature, i.e., “peripheral agents” and “divergent change” (see DiMaggio 1988; Battilana et al. 2009; Etzion and Ferraro 2010). However, the focused interviews along with archival data showed that they had very little or even no explanatory power in relation to the issues analyzed in this study.

Longitudinal and orthogonal coding and recoding enabled the identification of five theoretical constructs: Organizational legitimacy, organizational transparency, sense of justice and fairness, violent threats, and resistance to change. Table 2 reports the theoretical constructs, their definitions, references to the literature, and examples of the empirical data that led to their identification.

The “trustworthiness” of our research was an important issue in our data analysis strategy (see Kirk and Miller 1986; Zyzanski et al. 1992), i.e., external and internal validity, and the reliability of the qualitative data gathered through the study. Given the object and empirical context of this analysis (an anti-extortion organization in Sicily), this is a very serious issue since researchers can be misled by false information (see the literature on criminology and corruption). We took great care to develop a procedure that would guarantee the external and internal validity and reliability of our information. We verified external validity through: a) detailed descriptions of the organizational and the

Table 2 Theoretical constructs identified during the coding process

Variable	Definition	References	Example
Organization legitimacy	Legitimacy is a generalized perception or assumption that an entity's actions are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions	Maurer (1971), Suchman (1995)	"We are no-one...we cannot go to the television to say this thing ...because no-one will hear us" (D1503) "At the beginning no-one believed in us...everyone believed that Addiopizzo was another flash in the pan ..." (I21)
Organization transparency	Organizational transparency concerns information disclosure decisions to stakeholders and civil society in general	Vaccaro and Madsen (2009a), Vaccaro and Patino Echeverri (2010)	"Disclosing information was and is extremely important for us" (I21) "Providing all necessary information about our expenses is the best way to show that we are not only useful but also clean" (IV4)
Threat of violence (Mafia attacks)	Threats made by the Mafia to punish its opponents. Threatening behavior includes physical attacks against people and goods, verbal insults and other kinds of psychological pressure	Gambetta (1993, 2009)	"When one of us is on the road to paste the stickers ... is very scared" (1503)
Resistance to change	Opposition to modification to social norms, attitudes and activities at individual, organizational or social level	Kelley and Volkart (1952), Piderit (2000)	"This is the problem of this city...people prefer to continue to do what they were doing... they don't want to change their own city" (I21)
Sense of justice and fairness	Individual perceptions of social justice and fairness. Willingness to modify current social norms to address justice and fairness principles	Liska 1997	"This situation is unacceptable... we cannot live with the Mafia anymore... we need an honest society for us and for our children" (IV5)
Moral Imagination	An ability to imaginatively discern various possibilities for acting within a given situation and to envision the potential help and harm that are likely to result from a given action	Johnson (1993), Werhane (1999)	"People do not understand that the first to be damaged by the Mafia are normal citizens... people do not understand that we can damage the Mafia by boycotting all firms colluding with it... this is our drama... people are incapable of seeing beyond their noses" (I26)

environmental contexts; b) interviews with a wide range of stakeholders; c) near-verbatim transcripts of the interviews (see Yin 1994; Vaccaro and Madsen 2009b). Internal validity was guaranteed by: a) triangulation of data from different sources, b) triangulation of data from the same source, over time, c) peer-debriefing with colleagues and other experts (see Yin 1994; Vaccaro and Madsen 2009b). Reliability of our information was guaranteed by: a) triangulation of different information sources, b) detailed description of the procedures adopted during data gathering (e.g., methodology adopted for interviews), c) near-verbatim transcripts of interviews, d) coding and re-coding using different data analysts (e.g., Yin 1994; Vaccaro and Madsen 2009b), and e) discussion and review of the results of this study with some founders and 'critical' managers of Addiopizzo.

Results

This section is in three parts. First, we provide some information on the history and current activities of Addiopizzo; second, we identify main problems faced by

Addiopizzo in launching and carrying out its activities. The third part analyzes how different information disclosure processes are used by Addiopizzo to counter the adverse socio-economic environment and pursue its objectives.

Addiopizzo: Brief History and Current Activities

During the night of June 28 and in the early hours of June 29, 2004, a group of seven friends—mainly university students, unemployed and new entrants in the job market—pasted the walls of buildings in the center of Palermo with around 500 posters carrying the message: "A society Who Pays the Pizzo is a society without Dignity".¹ Although this was meant as a provocative action on the part of the seven friends, the reaction of Sicilian society was quite remarkable. The following day, the Palermo City Security Committee met to discuss these posters (which are called in the

¹ "Un popolo che paga il pizzo è un popolo senza dignità". The Sicilian term "Pizzo" refers to the money paid by a person or an institution to obtain protection from the Mafia. This is generally paid as a consequence of an extortive pressure by a Mafia family.

Sicilian dialect “*Pizzini*”). Newspapers and local TV discussed the posters and surmised about the identity of the author(s) of this quite singular initiative. Although the seven friends were “scared to death” (D1503, I26), they decided to own up to their action both in a letter sent to the national newspaper *Repubblica* and in an interview granted to the local newspaper *Giornale di Sicilia*. After a few weeks, they had a rudimentary website. A Sicilian entrepreneur, who had recently been the victim of an extortion attempt by a Mafia family, sent them an e-mail with the subject “AIUTO” (Help). This was just the first contact between what would become Addiopizzo and the Sicilian business community, and the beginning of a story of success. A deep sense of justice and the belief that “something should be done” motivated the seven friends to push their initiative forward. “We cannot allow the situation to go on as it is... we need to change it... it is an incredible injustice that people should be forced to pay bribes... it is a matter of justice...” (IV5)

In May 2005, Addiopizzo launched its “Against the bribe! Change your consumption” campaign.² It had two objectives. First, it was pleading with consumers to buy only from firms that did not collaborate with Mafia. Addiopizzo had introduced an “anti-racket certification” to identify firms that did not pay bribes to Mafia families. Second, the campaign was aimed at creating a financial incentive for firms to refuse to pay bribes despite the risks: Goods and services carrying the Addiopizzo label would attract responsible consumers and especially people ideologically opposed to the Mafia.

A year later, in May 2006, a list of 100 firms that had taken the decision to be associated with Addiopizzo was presented to the press, and 2 years on, in June 2008, 280 firms and around 9,500 consumers had joined the anti-racket initiative. Addiopizzo currently has some 50 permanent active members that manage and coordinate the organization’s activities, and more than 10,000 affiliates, i.e., 9,500 consumers who are committed to responsible anti-racket consumption (through the purchase of certified anti-racket products and services) and around 500 certified anti-racket business activities.

Addiopizzo focuses on six main activities. First, its ethical certification “Pizzo-free” which differentiates firms that refuse to pay bribes from those that collude with the Mafia (D314). To get this certification, firms have to undergo a fairly lengthy review process managed by a committee comprised of university professors, entrepreneurs, and members of other anti-racket organizations. Second, Addiopizzo provides information, contacts, indications, and suggestions to entrepreneurs fighting against the Mafia. Addiopizzo’s members prepare and provide documentation about how to respond to intimidation, e.g., how to deal with

door locks and bolts that have been filled with glue³ (see D145) or how to obtain financial support from the Government in the case of attacks from Mafia (see I23, I24). Third, Addiopizzo makes continuous efforts to denounce illicit and immoral Mafia activity and those who collude with it, through websites, newspaper articles, public protests, etc. (see I21, I23, I24). Fourth, Addiopizzo is very active in educating people about the Mafia and its corrupting influence. For example, from the beginning of 2006 to the end of 2009, more than 200 schools in the Palermo Area had hosted meetings and conferences held by Addiopizzo members (D219), to explain the immorality in Mafia business and the negative impact of these activities and the Mafia itself on Sicilian civil society. Fifth, Addiopizzo participates in anti-Mafia trials to represent consumers damaged by the activities of the Mafia, and to increase Addiopizzo’s funds by filing for compensation from Mafia bosses brought to judgment for their crimes (see D1523). Sixth, Addiopizzo supports the emergence of proto-institutions such as “Addiopizzo Travel Agency” and the “Addiopizzo Store”, which respectively offer tourism services (reservations, hotel bookings, etc.) and products (t-shirts, books, etc.) that have the Addiopizzo certification (see D1502, D1519–D1522).

Struggling in an Adverse Environment

The empirical evidence shows that, since its foundation, Addiopizzo has had to cope with four main categories of problems: 1) the limited moral imagination (Werhane 1999) of Sicilian society in relation to Mafia activity, 2) organizational legitimacy (Maurer 1971; Suchman 1995), 3) resistance to change (Kelley and Volkart 1952; Piderit 2000) among the Sicilian population, and 4) the risk of violent Mafia (re-)actions against individuals and organizations (Gambetta 1993, 2009). The relationship between these four important constructs is depicted in Fig. 1.

Extensive empirical evidence—previous studies, police and court reports, interviews, etc.—shows that a significant part of the Sicilian population has a rather limited capacity to analyze morally the Mafia problem. All interviews, archival data, internal documents of the police, etc. have confirmed that Sicilians do not see the institution of the Mafia as immoral and they do not understand how their behavior (e.g., purchasing decisions) can affect Mafia activities. In other words, Sicilians have a quite limited moral imagination (Werhane 1999). It is worth mentioning that the Mafia is very efficient in its private protection and network of preferential contacts with influential people (see

² “Contro il Pizzo Cambia I Consumi”.

³ One of the first acts by the Mafia against an entrepreneur/small firm that refuses to pay a bribe is to fill the shop’s bolts and locks with glue during the night. The next morning, the shop manager has to call for a carpenter or the police to get access to the premises, which results in loss of business.

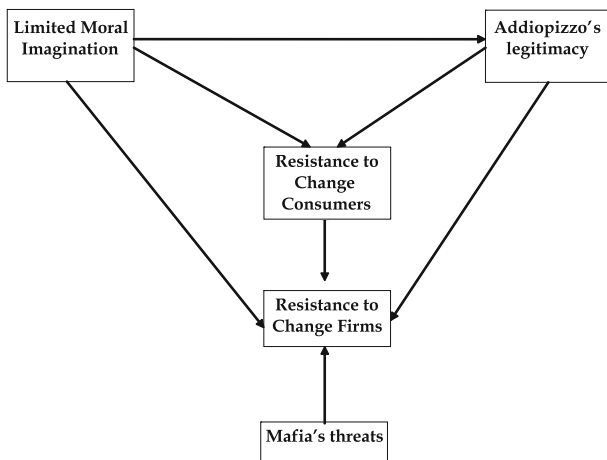


Fig. 1 Forces opposing Addiopizzo's action

Gambetta 1993; Orlando 2001; D998, D1004, D1005, D1006, D1007, D1008). This leads to its being understood by a significant proportion of Sicilians as an “ethical institution” as opposed to the State, which is often inefficient and unfair (see Gambetta 1993, 2009; Cavadi 2010). For example, an entrepreneur said in interview: “Mafia does its job very well ...you pay taxes but the State does not protect you ... you pay the *pizzo* and you can sleep peacefully... because no-one will touch ... or disturb you...” (Int. Var). Moreover, Mafia bosses are conspicuous in their public religious activity, attending Sunday masses and often playing leading roles in traditional religious processions (Gambetta 1993; Cavadi 2010). These activities convey the image of Mafiosi as respectable individuals. According to interviews and archival data, Sicilians struggle to understand that (a) colluding with the Mafia is not ethically proper and (b) responsible consumption behavior, i.e., not buying products from firms related to the Mafia, can damage Mafia business and in turn improve social welfare. One of the founders of Addiopizzo has indeed declared during an interview: “People do not understand that the first to be damaged by the Mafia are normal citizens... people do not understand that we can damage the Mafia by boycotting all firms colluding with it... this is our drama... people are incapable of seeing beyond their noses” (I26). Interviews and archival data have also pointed out that the limited ability of Sicilian citizens to acknowledge the negative impacts of the Mafia in turn negatively affects Addiopizzo's legitimacy and reinforces the resistance of customers and entrepreneurs/firms to change.

Addiopizzo's legitimacy (Maurer 1971; Suchman 1995) was a central issue that emerged from the interviews and publicly available information. For example, one of founders said that in the days immediately following the posting of the original posters, the seven friends were generally of the opinion that “We are no-one...we cannot go on television to

talk about this ...because no-one will listen to us” (D1503). Historically, students and young people have had no voice and no legitimacy in the war between firms and Mafia families over the payment of bribes (see Mascali 2010). Since the Mafia murdered Giovanni Falcone, an important anti-Mafia judge, in 1992, student organizations have organized sporadic public protests. However, no-one of these efforts had an impact on the Mafia's business. Moreover, in Sicilian culture, students and young people are considered passive victims (see Mascali 2010); there are examples of local newspapers describing the Mafia murdering a businessman in front of his helpless children (see Patti 1993). According to Sicilian social norms, there is no room for student organizations in the fight between Mafia and anti-Mafia, reinforced by the lack of moral imagination among Sicilians. “We often have to explain to people why the Mafia is wrong... before explaining to them why and how we [Addiopizzo] are useful...” (IV6).

The third category of problems affecting Addiopizzo's activity is related to Sicilians' resistance to change (Kelley and Volkart 1952; Piderit 2000). It affects both consumers and firms. According to interviews, customers' resistance to the Addiopizzo initiative was driven by a) a natural resistance to change established habits, b) the difficulty in accepting Addiopizzo's social legitimacy, and in some cases, and c) the problems related to Sicilians' limited moral imagination (see Fig. 1). Entrepreneurs and managers of Sicilian firms were resistant for these three reasons and also, and most importantly, for fear of possible violent reactions from the Mafia. Between 2005 and 2009, Mafia families had tried to terrorize individuals and firms associated with Addiopizzo in at least 15 situations. The intimidation included car burning (D353), robberies (see D335), threats (see D346), physical and verbal assaults (D359), etc. In one case, a shop was burned out after an entrepreneur had gone to the police about threats from the Mafia, and had joined Addiopizzo. It is also worth mentioning that Addiopizzo activists experience physical and verbal aggressions. Violent actions against them can be undertaken by Mafia affiliates or by entrepreneurs colluding with the criminal organization (D26).

It seems evident that there is plenty of incentives, therefore, for entrepreneurs and business managers either to avoid any contact with the anti-racket movement or to be “double-game players”, i.e., pay the *Pizzo* while also concurring with Addiopizzo.⁴ The reaction of the Mafia is unsurprising since it was keen to dissuade people from signing up to the changes promoted by Addiopizzo, given the earnings obtained from bribes. It is estimated that earnings from bribery during 2008 amounted to 9 billion euros (Confesercenti 2009, p. 7).

⁴ This was a serious problem. The police discovered that Mafia bosses were suggesting that entrepreneurs adopt this strategy to benefit from Mafia protection and the advantages of the anti-racket certification.

Dynamic and Strategic Information Disclosure

Interviews and archival data highlight that an important activity for Addiopizzo, since its foundation, is information disclosure. As one of the founders pointed out at the beginning of an interview, "... what we do is *communi-action* ... we do things communicating... our stickers are above all a provocation to society" (I26). It is worth mentioning that the organization's internal resources are very limited, consisting of voluntary work from its members and affiliates, accommodation in the form of an apartment which was originally owned by a Mafioso and lately confiscated by the State, and information, this last described as "the most powerful resource we have" (Interview, I22). Consequently, information disclosure decisions are carefully considered by the members of Addiopizzo's "Directive Council", i.e., a small group of about eight members of the association who oversee the strategic and operational aspects of Addiopizzo's activities.

Addiopizzo's strategy is to use six different types of informational media to disclose information. They are *Pizzini* and banners, the website, newspapers and magazines, local TV, its ethical certification labeling, regular talks in schools and other public forums. The information disclosed concerns mainly nine typologies of information, i.e., moral intentions and objectives, current activities and initiatives, the names of consumers and firms subscribing to the initiative, budgetary and other information about Addiopizzo's internal activities, invitations to join the organization, information about Mafia attacks against people related to the anti-Mafia movement, and "information that no-one wants to give" about Mafia activities.

Interviews and textual analysis of the documentation made available by Addiopizzo show that information disclosure is meant to address the four issues already mentioned, i.e., limited moral imagination, organizational legitimacy, resistance to change and threat of Mafia attacks. In other words, Addiopizzo discloses information strategically to address the problems affecting either its own activities or those of its affiliates. (Table 3 summarizes the types of information, the means of disclosure, and the issues that they address.) One of the founders has pointed out that "we disclose information in a very strategic way... we discuss for hours, even for days ... about which kinds of information we should provide... we know that sometimes information is the only weapon we have to reach an objective or to resolve a problem..." (I26).

We identified 22 press releases describing Addiopizzo's intentions and objectives: "Addiopizzo is an association of volunteers with no political association and whose single main activity within the broader anti-Mafia front, is the fight against a racket operationalized through the tool of critical consumption" (W1). Interviews and textual

analysis show that these messages are aimed at gaining organizational legitimacy. One Addiopizzo member declared that: "At the beginning, no-one believed in us...everyone believed that Addiopizzo was just another flash in the pan ... disclosing information was and is extremely important" (I21). In some cases, this tension related to achieving organizational legitimacy is expressed explicitly in press releases: "We believe that creating a group of citizens that focus their consumption on [products and services produced by] entrepreneurs who do not pay bribes... is a very useful social tool ..." (D303).

Another important feature of Addiopizzo's information disclosure policies concerns the "full transparency" approach to its internal activities. Full information about income, expenses, and other financial issues are posted on the website. According to the interviews, this practice is designed to demonstrate the organization's legitimacy: "We want people to know exactly what we are doing... how we spend our money... where our money is coming from... providing all necessary information about our expenses is the best way to show that we are not only useful but also clean" (Interview IV3).

Addiopizzo discloses information about itself and also gathers and makes public information about the outside environment. In some cases, disclosure of this latter type of information is aimed at addressing more than one problem as in the case of information about the Mafia attacks on people collaborating with the anti-Mafia movement. For example, the press release of April 17th 2009 states that:

Addiopizzo ... expresses solidarity with Vincenzo Conticello, the owner of the Antica Focacceria S. Francesco. On April 16th, this entrepreneur received a threatening letter. This message arrived immediately after "the white night for legality" ... it is a further attempt to intimidate this person who is on the Addiopizzo list. (D375).

When we questioned Addiopizzo's members about the reasons behind the disclosure of such information, they mentioned three things. The first was that public disclosure of a Mafia attack or intimidation would attract the attention of the main media, of the local population, and the police (business owners did not always report threats and attacks), which would temporarily reduce the activity. The Mafia likes to work silently, underground, away from police and public attention: "You speak about them... and it works like an anesthetic ... they stop threatening that business owner... at least for a while..." (IV2). Second, spreading information signals that Addiopizzo is taking action to denounce Mafia intimidation, and to support business people in difficult situations. Interviews with and statements made by entrepreneurs (see D1508) who have signed up with Addiopizzo confirm that this signaling activity is

Table 3 Typologies of disclosed information and related issues to be fixed

Information typology	Information medium	Legitimacy	Resistance to change (consumers)	Resistance to change (firms)	Threat of violence (Mafia attacks)	Limited moral imagination
Moral intentions and objectives	Newspapers and lately the website	✓				
Current activities and initiatives	Website, TVs, Posters, newspapers, and magazines	✓	✓	✓		
List of consumers and firms adhering to the initiative and activist members of the association	Website and meeting with the press	✓	✓	✓		
Budget & other internal activities	Website	✓				
Invitations to join Addiopizzo	Physical stickers and internet banners	✓	✓	✓		
Mafia's attacks against people who are related to the anti-Mafia movement	Website, newspapers, and magazines	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Information "no-one wants to say": the Mafia's illegal and immoral activities	Website, newspapers, magazines, and conferences		✓	✓		✓
Ethical certifications	Stickers		✓	✓	✓	✓

extremely important to convince new individuals and organizations to join. Third, the members of the Directive Council confirmed that reporting the Mafia activities and disclosing information provide legitimacy for Addiopizzo's efforts: "We are becoming the reference for all entrepreneurs... if something bad happens... they call us" (IV2).

Addiopizzo also uses information disclosure to fight against double-game players. In particular, whenever a double-game player is discovered by the police or some Addiopizzo activities, he/she is publicly reported. This strategy is extremely effective since "whenever we denunciate a double-game player... he is in deep trouble... because he will be scorned by everyone ... although some Mafia bosses have suggested to the people they protect that they play the double game... a lot of people even inside the Mafia consider this practice to be absolutely inadmissible. So, reporting a person for being a double player means condemning him/her to the censure of pro- and anti-Mafia people..." (IV3).

There is also the category "information that no-one wants to speak about", i.e., information about illicit or immoral activities concerning the Mafia in collaboration with local business people and politicians. For example, Addiopizzo has uncovered the strong connections between Toto Cuffaro, former President of the Sicilian Region, and some Mafia affiliates (see 393). Disclosure of this type of information has at least two objectives. First, it highlights the immoral nature of Mafia activities, providing more reasons for consumers and firms to enlist with Addiopizzo: "People do not really understand what are the consequences of colluding with the Mafia ... this is the big

problem of this place." Second, it supports and eventually increases Addiopizzo's legitimacy by pointing to the highly immoral nature of Mafia and the contribution provided by Addiopizzo in this context.

Discussion and Contributions to the Literature

This article contributes to the literature on corruption, business ethics, and CSR in at least five ways.

The first contribution is empirical: It provides a detailed micro-level analysis of a successful anti-racket organization. This article describes Addiopizzo's origins, activities, context, and main actors. This research complements previous corruption studies in the business ethics and CSR literature, which focus on the role and policies implemented by high-level institutions such as government agencies (see Hess and Dunfee 2000, 2003; Hess 2009) and large companies (see Argandoña 2007; Gordon and Miyake 2001; Calderon et al. 2009), but tend to overlook the fundamental role and opportunities that bottom-up initiatives can play in the fight against corruption and illegal behavior. This study also shows how ethical drivers, such as a sense of justice, fairness, and civil responsibility, and the individual voluntary action of "normal" citizens, such as students and unemployed people, can lead to the creation of a successful anti-racket organization in a territory plagued by Mafia intimidation.

This article also contributes to the literature on organizational transparency (see Hess 2007, 2008; Santana and Wood 2009; Vaccaro and Madsen 2009a; Vaccaro and

Patino Echeverri 2010) by identifying a series of mechanisms for strategic information disclosure, or “strategic transparency”, that can be adopted by organizations to fight against adverse environmental conditions. Strategic transparency is the selective disclosure of different kinds of information designed to focus the attention of civil society on specific situations that are immoral and/or illegal. Addiopizzo has disclosed information on specific events (e.g., the burning of a car belonging to a local businessman by a Mafia family), at specific points in time (e.g., immediately after the car burning episode) to increase its leverage on public opinion against the Mafia. Strategic transparency was used, in particular, to address critical problems faced by Addiopizzo, i.e., the threat of attacks, the resistance to change, and the limited moral imagination of the local population. In this sense, Addiopizzo has strategically used information disclosure “as a weapon to fight against the enemy” (I26). It should be noted that previous research associates transparency with information disclosure about an organization’s internal activities: Organizations are deemed to be transparent if they make public information about their internal activities (see Vaccaro and Madsen 2009a; Vaccaro and Patino Echeverri 2010; Turilli and Floridi 2009; Santana and Wood 2009). In this study, we point out that transparency is also related to the disclosure of information about situations external to the organizational boundaries, but which impact on civil society. This case study extends our understanding of organizational transparency by highlighting that the *informational expectations* of civil society (Tapscott and Ticoll 2003; Vaccaro and Madsen 2009a) can include both an organization’s internal activities and also activities that the organization is aware of and whose disclosure will influence society. This is extremely important in social environments with a large criminal organization presence, where free speech is severely constrained for fear of reprisals from the criminal groups involved. This study presents a case of a civil society that expects the organization to publicly denounce illegal and immoral activities. This introduces the third contribution of this study, i.e., the impact of information disclosure on organizational legitimacy.

Almost 50 years of research in sociology and organizational strategy demonstrates difficulties experienced by young organizations in achieving legitimacy (see the seminal works of Stinchcombe 1965; Zucker 1983; Ashforth and Gibbs 1990). This has considerable significance for new institutions that are created in adverse socio-economic environments (Zucker 1983). Efforts to achieve legitimacy can end in contradictory or no results (Ashforth and Gibbs 1990). The strategic approach to organizational legitimacy (see Dowling and Pfeffer 1975; Pfeffer 1981; Etzion and Ferraro 2010) has pointed to an extensive set of symbols,

rituals, and procedures that can be adopted by organizations to gain legitimacy. For example, Etzion and Ferraro (2010) describe the strategic use of analogies by the Global Reporting Initiative to gain legitimacy in sustainability reporting. This article contributes to this literature by showing that organizational transparency can be an effective means of gaining legitimacy. Addiopizzo has achieved legitimacy in Sicilian society through a strategic transparency approach that was composed of five different processes. The first is the persistent disclosure over time of the ethical drivers and objectives of the association’s founders and members: Addiopizzo’s ethical nature and intent is a message continuously communicated by the association through press releases, the organization’s website, public talks, posters, etc. Second, Addiopizzo is fully transparent about the names of members, affiliates, and its internal assets (see Budget, etc.). Full (internal) transparency is achieved through the organization’s website and official communications. Third, Addiopizzo discloses information on areas that previously no-one dared to speak about, on the illicit and immoral activities of the Mafia and their negative consequences for Sicilian society. Fourth, Addiopizzo makes strategic use of “*Pizzini*” or small posters on the walls of buildings. And fifth, Addiopizzo uses an anti-racket certification. All these processes have underpinned the organization’s *moral legitimization* (Suchman 1995), convincing civil society, or at least its honest factions, about the authentic, moral nature and intent of its activities, and the evil being wrought by the Mafia.

This article contributes also to the literature on Mafia and criminal organizations (see Orlando 2001; Paoli 2007; Dickie 2007; Lewis 2003; Gambetta 1993, 2009; Lodato 2006, 2007) through a first longitudinal analysis of a quite successful anti-Mafia movement. Previous research stresses the cultural role played by the Mafia in local society, and the difficulty, or impossibility, of reversing the social standing of Mafia families in civil society (see Orlando 2001; Dickie 2007; Gambetta 1993, 2009). This study describes an effective and successful initiative that is fighting Mafia influence in the business and political arenas, and also, and more importantly, in the cultural domain. In this sense, Addiopizzo is an example of best practice because it is succeeding in changing the views of Sicilian civil society about the Mafia and its influences. While in the past, Mafia has been considered to be a semi-respectable organization, with something of a ‘Robin Hood’ image of robbing the rich to give to the poor (Gambetta 1993; Lewis 2003; Cavadi 2010), Addiopizzo is making it clear that the Mafia is far from being an ethical organization and that its activities have a negative impact which is to the cost of ordinary citizens. Addiopizzo has organized consumers and empowered ethical firms to combat the Mafia’s influence through responsible consumption and business.

The last contribution of this study is that it bridges the corruption (Hess 2009), organizational transparency (see Vaccaro and Madsen 2009a), and organizational legitimacy (Etzion and Ferraro 2010) literatures. Existing work on corruption and transparency is rather isolated from mainstream research into business ethics and CSR. However, this study shows the high interrelatedness of these issues and the role played by ethical motives (Fassin 2009) in the development of an anti-racket initiative.

Perspectives for Further Research

This article suggests several avenues for further research on corruption, CSR, and organizational transparency. We highlight the three that in our view seem the most promising.

This study focused on the main challenges to Addiopizzo in launching an anti-racket initiative against the Mafia “pizzo”. Further research could analyze the interplay between Addiopizzo and other organizations that are fighting the Mafia such as the anti-Mafia Police, anti-racket organizations among Sicilian small businesses, etc. Of particular interest are the factors that affect the interplay between high-level institutions (e.g., government institutions, multinational companies) and local organizations, and the outputs of such collaborations. Further studies should also explore how the central government can and should support firms and other organizations in implementing strategic transparency aimed at fighting against corruption.

A second line of research could be the role of women in the fight against corruption. Based on the empirical context of this research, it would be interesting to analyze the role of women in the development and support for anti-Mafia organizations and, in particular, the role of women related to the Mafia’s victims. Previous research has analyzed the role of women in Mafia-type organizations (see Pizzini-Gambetta 2008, 2009), but does not consider their influence in anti-Mafia movements. Studies could be conducted in other socio-economic environments with high levels of criminal organization influence (see Russia, Japan, and Latin America).

Finally, we highlighted the high level of interrelatedness between the fight against corruption, organizational transparency, and organizational legitimacy by analyzing the case of a successful anti-racket organization in Sicily. Further research could explore the existence of possible nomological relationships, perhaps by analyzing the impact of information disclosure on the legitimacy of anti-corruption initiatives, at the intra-organizational level or in multi-cultural environments. Further research should investigate the socio-economic conditions that facilitate or

oppose the legitimization of anti-corruption initiatives and the symbolic role played by transparency actions in these difficult contexts.

Conclusions

The anti-Mafia judge, Giovanni Falcone, maintained that “The Mafia is not invincible; it is a human fact and, like all other human facts, it had a beginning and it will also have an end.” The case of Addiopizzo would seem to be confirming this prediction and is suggesting new innovative ways for fighting organized crime. This case shows the critical importance of individuals, and particularly young generations, in the fight against corruption and in the development of a fair, just society.

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