

Thinking politics sociologically The Daily Life of the Professional Politician between Innovation and Determinism¹

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Short Biography of Massimo Cerulo

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Abstract: The aim of my essay is to present some reflections on the possibility of thinking politics sociologically, from the point of view of a sociologist of everyday-life. During more than one year of ethnographic research on the field, I followed sixteen politicians in Calabria (south of Italy), eleven men and five women, using the shadowing technique and interviews. I will, here, attempt to resume some results of my enquiry, focusing in particular on the relation between innovation and determinism, as it comes out from the everyday actions of the political agents. Referring to the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu and to his analysis of the political field, I will underline how this latter influences practically the political agents. The internal dynamics in the political field seem to firmly bind the politicians and by consequence these latter appear to be forced to lay down experience and innovation. Their behaviour and their actions are determined by the political field's logic and they seem compelled to act and take the world for granted. It appears therefore that there is no space for imagination in the professional politician's everyday-life. The political field seems to spread an inescapable determinism.

Keywords: Everyday life, ethnography, Bourdieu, political field, determinism.

Presentation

A long time ago politics has become an object of interest for social sciences. Considered as a science, as a technique or as the government art, politics, being a specific social activity, is a privileged object of study for the so-called social sciences. A problem however lies in the fact that social sciences almost always consider and study politics 'politically', that is, failing to take distance from what happen internally and

¹ Proposal presented in occasion of "Imagining the political/The politics of imagination. The Sociological Review. 100 th. Anniversary Conference". 1-3 June 2009, Stratford-upon-Avon.

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overlapping their analysis to the political ones (Auyero, 2006; Tilly, 2006). In other words we could say that macro aspects (such as law propositions, parties' internal dynamics, election competitions etc.) nullify micro aspects (such as emotions, feelings, behaviours, habits, political agents' attitudes, etc.). The questions that I will try to answer here are: is it possible to think politics sociologically? Is it possible from the sociological point of view of everyday-life? How to bring the attention on the ordinary details that represent the personal print of a political agent?

In order to provide an answer, I will recall a few results coming from my recent ethnographic research on a group of Italian professional politicians (Cerulo, 2009)². In few words, I performed an analysis of the professional politicians' everyday-life, of their actual life-styles, their routines and their peculiar forms of relation. My general hypothesis of work is that such an analysis could contribute to clarify the political class' 'self-referentiality', that is, its specific difficulties relating to the necessities of the represented population. The carried out research intends to show how the subjects' modes of action, evaluations and cultural orientations are significant in relation to the punctual situation and to the environment they belong to.

I called my research an ethnographic study, since I followed sixteen politicians from South of Italy during more than one year of research in the field, using the shadowing technique and making conversational and ethnographic interviews (Kaufmann, 2007;

² By professional politicians I intend those subjects identified by the following elements: 1) they enter politics from the bottom and move forward following a party or union carrier, or they are 'lent' to politics, meaning that they leave their previous professional activities in order to fully commit themselves to politics; 2) they full time devote themselves to political activities: whether they have an other job, this is neglected (put in stand by) during the whole time of their political office; 3) their income comes prevailingly from politics; 4) most of the time they move forward within a party; 5) they are 'professional' politicians in so far as they devote all their time and resources to political activities (this doesn't imply an expertise of the political world: the research include young politicians and newcomers).

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Spradley, 1979). Among the politicians I studied, there are eleven men and five women, thirteen belonging to the left wing parties in general and three to right wing parties in general; they go from the district councillor till the town councillor of a thirty-five-thousands inhabitants town. On five subjects I applied the shadowing technique: as a shadow, I followed them for a week from the moment they leave from home in the morning until the moment they come back in the evening. It was a half-covered observation: only the observed subject was aware of my real identity, in front of the others I played different roles each time: I was press agent, personal advisor, cousin, tourist agent, or the politician's pupil. 'Being somebody's shadow' means to follow the politician almost everywhere and therefore to set out a particular empathy with him, necessary for the 'cohabitation' (eg Laplantine, 1996; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1996; Schwartz and Jacobs, 1979; Whyte, 1943): I was with the politician during working times, relax times, reflection times and times of worry. This means to observe without intrusion, to look without comment, to participate without letting your presence be perceived (see also Sclavi, 2006). Thus, as a very careful chameleon hiding its identity, I attempted to enter the political field hiding within it.

The main results of my research can be summarized in four points: 1) Calabria political class seems to be strongly 'self-referential': it has a peculiar difficulty representing citizens; 2) Calabria political class seems to live in a 'world apart' (Schutz, 1962). The behaviours and habits of the politicians are different from normal citizens' behaviours. Citizens consider them like 'privileged strangers'; 3) the politician is a person of habit, not very inclined to changes or hazard. During his training he learns an art and gains experience. He subsequently gives up the experience of innovation

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(*Erlebnis*) (Simmel, 1908) and he starts living into a world taken for granted; 4) the emotions and feelings of the politician are ‘commercialized’ (Illouz, 2007; Hochschild, 2003): the subjects feel uncomfortable showing their ‘authentic’ emotions.

Here I will focus in particular on the third point. Referring to Pierre Bourdieu’s theory on the political field (Bourdieu, 2000), I will try to reflect on the relation between innovation and determinism in the political agents’ everyday-life. The results coming from my ethnographic enquiry show that, from a general point of view, in the Italian professional politician’s everyday-life there is very little space for innovation, imagination, or creativity. The political field’s dynamics seem indeed to compel the subjects to codified and standardized behaviours. In other words, the political agents’ world is very often taken for granted and their experience ends up to be crystallized.

Pierre Bourdieu and his theory on the political field

Pierre Bourdieu’s social theory is the theoretical ground of my research. I refer in particular to Bourdieu’s analysis on the ‘political field’³. I focus on Bourdieu’s proposal about the correct sociological approach studying the political area that is entering the ‘field of politics’ (Bourdieu, 2000, 1996, 1992, 1988, 1980, 1977). According to Bourdieu, everyday we are plunged in politics, meaning that in everyday speeches, in television, on the newspapers and in general on the media, we hear about politics or,

³ By *field* Bourdieu intends an area of social life internally determined by the condision among a certain number of agents of some interests, relations of power, rules etc. It is clear that in social life there are innumerable fields: from the economical to the cultural one, from the sportive to the emotional one etc. Every field is characterized by a partial autonomy and each field gives form to a peculiar kind of capital, that is, to a kind of resource, whose possession corresponds to the leadership position and for whose possession people fight. Bourdieu’s concept of *field* is not something defined *a priori* and it has not necessarily a name in the ordinary language. These features summerize Bourdieu’s innovation in

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anyway, we listen to people who ‘make’ politics. We therefore have the feeling to be aware of what happen in the political field and somehow we believe to be, us too, able to make politics (at least in our private sphere). Everyday then, what we listen about politics, what the political agents’ speeches say, though we think of quickly forgetting it, is deposited in our cognitive systems, creating thus a sort of habit to politics and a subsequent ‘representation of politics’. According to Bourdieu, however, the main issue today is to be able to think politics, without thinking it politically (Bourdieu, 2000). The problem is, according to the French sociologist, that it is difficult to think politics, since we never fully know it. The familiarity we think we have with politics (familiarity due mainly to the media) is the main obstacle to the knowledge of the political world: we believe to understand everything, when instead nothing is clear.

It would be necessary therefore to adopt the social enquiry’s point of view. This latter enters a certain field of analysis without being carried by its common places and modes of thinking. Sociology keeps a theoretical and methodological strictness that allows to thematize what happens in a certain field, without being compelled to apply the associate *frame*: in other words, to study politics is not to carry out an analysis according to a political *frame*, but to preserve a cognitive *frame*, as the social scholar does. Bourdieu summarizes this epistemological problem by saying: «penser la politique autrement que politiquement, la penser sociologiquement» (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 9). As he specifies in the following:

sociological theories on the subject, placing him *beyond* the reflection on social differentiation (Bourdieu, 1997, 1992).

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It is legitimate that the sociologist intervenes in the social world, when you deal with the social world. But when you deal with the social world, first of all everybody thinks to be an expert – already Durkheim used to claim that: the major difficulty sociology meets with is that everyone thinks to naturally be a sociologist. [...] Politicians today don't make use of sociologists, but of so-called experts. There is an enormous difference here, because by sociologist we mean a social scientist who answers in front of other social scientist and not only in front of politicians and journalists; someone who answers in front of other sociologists, that are not only the local sociologists. Such a contradiction between the necessities of science and the necessities of action is extremely relevant and, consequently, a great loss of the sociologists' scientific energy is produced, and they don't render all the services that they could. [...] The sociologists destroy illusions. (Bourdieu, 2000, pp. 43-45, my translation)⁴.

According to Bourdieu, the notion of political field is very beneficial for the sociological analysis: it allows for example to exactly reconstruct the political reality and the political game. It allows as well to compare the social reality with the others, with the religious field, the artistic field, etc. (finally, the comparative methodology in social sciences could be one of the most efficient tools for the constructive and

⁴ «Il est légitime que le sociologues interviennent dans le monde social quand il s'agit du monde social. [...] Mais quand il s'agit du monde social, d'abord tout le monde pense être expert - Durkheim le disait toujours: la difficulté majeure que rencontre la sociologie tient au fait que tout le monde pense qu'il est spontanément sociologue [...] Aujourd'hui les politiques n'ont plus des sociologues, ils ont des experts. Voilà! C'est une énorme différence, parce que sociologues ça veut dire quelqu'un qui rend compte devant des sociologues et pas devant des politiques, ou des journalistes; qui rend compte devant des sociologues mais pas seulement devant des sociologues nationaux. Cette contradiction entre les exigences de la science et les exigences de l'action est extrêmement importante et, du même coup, il y a une très grande déperdition de l'énergie scientifique des sociologues, qui ne rendent pas tous les services qu'ils pourraient rendre. [...] Les sociologues détruisent les illusions».

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analytical phase. According to Durkheim, sociology *is* comparative methodology (Durkheim, 1895)).

The field is a microcosm and within it we find properties, relations, processes not otherwise available in the global world. These phenomena, guided by a principle of autonomy, assume in the political field a peculiar form:

A field is an autonomous microcosm within the social macrocosm. Autonomous, according to the etymology, means that it has its own law, its own *nomos*, that has in itself the principle and the rule of its functioning. It is an universe within which its own evaluation's criteria operate, but they have no value in the near microcosms. An universe responding to its own laws, different from the ones of the ordinary social world. Whoever enters politics, as whoever enter the religious environment, has to perform a transformation, a conversion, and, even if this latter doesn't appear to him as such, even if he is not aware of it, such a transformation is tacitly imposed to him, since any transgression would imply scandal or exclusion. (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 52, my translation)⁵.

A world (almost) apart

The professional politicians' world seems to be somehow apart, separated, closed on itself, although not entirely so. Finally, according to Bourdieu, the political universe lays on the principle of exclusion: the more the field comes out, the biggest are its

⁵ «Un champ est un microcosme autonome à l'intérieur du macrocosme social. Autonome, selon l'étymologie, veut dire qui a sa propre loi, son propre *nomos*, qui a en lui-même le principe et la règle de son fonctionnement. C'est un univers dans lequel sont à l'œuvre des critères d'évaluation qui lui sont propres et qui ne vaudraient pas dans le microcosme voisin. Un univers obéissant à ses propres lois, qui sont différentes des lois du monde social ordinaire. Quelqu'un qui entre en politique, comme quelqu'un qui entre en religion, doit opérer une transformation, une conversion et même si celle-ci ne lui apparaît

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autonomy and the process of professionalization within it. According to the Bourdieu, the professional politician is someone who has several political expertises and claims his membership; he generally can't stand any intrusion by the laymen of politics or, even worse, by the technicians lent to politics. Whoever enters the field has to professionalize himself, he has to *train in politics*: learn the language, the tricks, the relations of power regulating the field itself, etc. Such a specific culture is apprehended *in the field* and *within the field*: it is not a purely academic culture, but a set of knowledges (notions and practical knowledge) only empirically transmissible. The subjects thus learn to behave normally – that is politically – and to participate to what Bourdieu disparaging calls *politique politicienne*. Only the politicians are competent speaking of it: politics belong to them. Whoever then has power within the field is the one who is able to produce effects, that is, the professional politician.

Moreover Bourdieu thinks that the subjects acting within the field can actually say or do certain things, only through shared relations with the other people and not, therefore, by the legitimacy given to them by the voters. In other words, the notion of a partially autonomous field necessarily states the question of the principle of political actions: it necessarily leads to think that in order to understand what the politician does, it is important to consider his relations with the voters, but most of all it is more important to consider his position within the microcosm, as the real form of legitimacy for his actions.

pas comme telle, même s'il n'en a pas conscience, elle lui est tacitement imposée, la sanction en cas de transgression étant l'échec ou l'exclusion».

A clear tension then comes out between the alleged professional politicians' 'closure' within their field of action and the principle of representativity that compels them to be open to the exterior in regards to the represented electors.

According to Bourdieu the position of the subject within the political field is absolutely central in order to understand the extension of his power of action and, by consequence, the power he holds:

The fact that the political field is autonomous and it has its own logic, that it is the origin of the position taken by its members, implies that it exists a specific political interest within the field that is not immediately referable to the interests of the electors. There are some interests defined according to the relations established with the people of the same party or against the people of other parties. The functioning within the field produce a kind of closure effect. Such an observable effect is the result of a process : the more a political space becomes autonomous, the more it goes on according to its own logic, the more it tends to function in conformity with the interests within the field, the more the fracture with the profanes increases. (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 58, my trans.)⁶.

Within the political field (as within the other fields in the social space) there are symbolic fights and all subjects dispose of different weapons, capitals and powers.

According to Bourdieu, the political power is a kind of *capital of reputation*, due to

⁶ «Ainsi, le fait que le champ politique est autonome et qu'il a sa logique propre et que cette logique est au principe des prises de position de ceux qui y sont engagés, implique qu'il y a un intérêt politique spécifique, qui n'est pas automatiquement réductible aux intérêts des mandants. Il y a des intérêts qui se définissent dans la relation avec les gens du même parti ou contre les gens des autres partis. Le fonctionnement en champ produit une sorte d'effet de fermeture. Cet effet observable est le résultat d'un processus: plus un espace politique s'autonomise, plus il avance selon sa logique propre, plus il tend à fonctionner conformément aux intérêts inhérents au champ, plus la coupure avec les profanes s'accroît».

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notoriety or to the fact of being notorious to the public opinion. From this point of view, the political capital is a symbolic capital, bound to the modality of perception in the electorate.

However, as Bourdieu points out, each field has its own peculiarities⁷: it can never in fact become fully autonomous without disappearing. The politicians are compelled to periodically refer to their electors and to their ‘clients’, otherwise there would be no chance for their existence. Whatever power the politician holds, he must confront the electorate in a persuasive way, otherwise he would disappear from the field itself.

This is the point of Bourdieu’s theory.

As it very well known, the question of the relation between the social scientist, the political world and the truth is rather complex. Each social scientist proposes theories and truths within his discipline of reference on the base of the available scientific elements. During my enquiry, I studied the political sphere from an exclusively sociological point of view, thinking politics from a point of view that is ‘other’. I focused on the micro aspects of the profession, on those behavioural details, insignificant at first sight, but rich of useful informations for the macro analysis of the social reality if thoroughly considered (Balbo, 2002). Briefly I will try to justify this point.

⁷ On this matter, Bourdieu speaks of *homology*, meaning by that a sort of relative autonomy, indicating not the identity but the similarity of the field with the surrounding social space. Within the field in fact the

Towards a political ethnography

Observing and ‘living’ the subjects’ everyday-life, I looked for the right key in order to verify Bourdieu’s theories and, at the same time, I described *from* the field its features and its subjects members.

The observation of such features required to be present in the field: the description of the subjects’ everyday-life is made possible only plunging in their habits. Living with them and like them, I responded to Bourdieu’s invitation to study politics sociologically.

What comes out from my observation in the field is that both men and women, young and old, all the interviewed political actors agree with the definition of the contemporary political class in Calabria as fully self-referential, an end in itself, not discussing with or implicating the citizen:

Today the political class is unable to relate to the citizens in person. The value of the political representation is lost, because we suffered from a drift in the conception of democracy: [...] (Democracy) is a competition of interests in a restricted leading group and it is employed by the group in order to find legitimacy and not in order to be representative. [...] Citizens then are just an instrument of legitimation. The self-referentiality doesn’t depend on education, [...] but on the fact that the vote has no value in respect to the whole; we face everyday changes of sides, new born parties, dying parties, etc. [...] If I keep in mind this pattern, it is clear to me that I’m interested in the citizen just when I need his vote: there are 30 day of electoral campaign, I promise you a lot, I make fun of you all over the place and then ‘bye bye’, as soon as my aim is achieved. Hence it isn’t true that people have

same structures of the social space are reproduced. The field then is never something fully apart from the

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no wish to participate, but it is true that the politicians don't fancy to be bothered by the people (m, 38)⁸.

Politicians are a caste and participation, excluded the electoral campaign period, is fully banished. Unfortunately the point of view of the citizen is never taken into account; decisions are made within the political field; from outside nothing is understood and everything goes on (m, 36).

Nobody dared to say the contrary. The causes given in order to explain the problem are multiple:

- Firstly, the electoral law that applies closed registers and gives no choosing power to the citizens. The selection and the hierarchical order of names are previously made within the political field. The political agents, then, adopt an utilitarian point of view for the political survival: rather than persuade the citizens, they are compelled to be good at gaining trust from their party or coalition leaders, since these latter are the one who put the names on the register, the ones giving the investiture to the political activity. No dialogue outside the field seems to be necessary, but the dialogue with the superiors within the field is vital:

Unfortunately in our county the leading class are such according to the negative sense of the word: very self-referential, very self-centred, they disapprove who behaves according to free thinking. It is much more comfortable to have *yes men* next to you, rather than people escaping from control in every choice (f, 41).

social structure but it reproduces it (Bourdieu, 1997).

- Secondly, the self-referentiality makes the politician comfortable. He has his ‘seat’ secured along the years of legislation and he enjoys benefits and advantages coming from his position. Finally the citizen is not required. The politician after all, according to the system now in place, never answers for anything if not to his immediate superior. At best he will remember the citizen around six months before the elections and perform a scenographic but false opening of the field.

- Thirdly, the political class self-referentiality makes sweet dreams, since most of the citizens seem not to be educated to criticism. Citizens are very little aware of the political field’s choices. Public opinion, in fact, passively accepts such a state of affairs. Public opinion apparently does nothing in actual fact, not even to scratch the state of affairs, not even to discuss it, surely it does nothing to undertake it. This is the problem concerning specifically the public sphere. As Renate Siebert writes:

In Calabria, the public sphere both exists and doesn’t exist. It exists in so far that even here public institutions work. [...] Formally, so to speak, it exists: public institutions testify the accomplished integration within the Nation, within the middle-class democratic system, within the industrial civilization. But from other points of view the public sphere is absent, substantially: people cannot identify themselves with what is public: no awareness of the public thing exists – as a space, an institution – at the same time personal and of others (Siebert, 1986, p. 28, my transl.).

⁸ In brackets the sex and age of the interviewed politician.

- In fourth place, from the citizens point of view it is difficult to understand what happens within the political field: what they discuss about, who decides, what priorities are followed, who rules on who, etc. The field's closure allows the politicians to transfer illusions concerning their conduct to the people. Citizens are persuaded to know the field's internal dynamics, while, at the contrary, they seem to rather ignorant about them⁹.

But why no political agents seem to really wish to come out from this overruling self-referentiality? In order to answer this question I follow once more Bourdieu's analysis.

Imagination's sacrifice

I borrow Bourdieu definition and I refer to the political field as a structure, *structured* and *structuring*, able to determine the behaviour and the relations among subjects. The action performed by the field is stiff. It compels the subject to adapt to the internal dynamics of the field itself. It compels to a sacrifice of any innovative will, to a repression of the imaginative faculties. We could say that the political field has its own

⁹ Bourdieu distinguishes two criteria of perception of reality: one political, the other ethical. Not everybody has a specifically political *habitus*, allowing a participation to 'the great game of politics'. The ethical criteria – proper to the 'dominated classes', that is, the classes less provided of economic, cultural and social capital – leads the subject to think 'non-politically' and to feel excluded from the 'field of power' ('public space'). The lack of instruments, as for example language, behaviors, knowledges (both in the sense of influential friendships and in the sense of informations) brings to self-exclusion. A process of selection of the agents allowed or not to participate in the political debate is triggered. Such a selection comes out since the subjects with ethical criteria of analysis continuously live with a feeling of inadequacy, leading to self-exclusion. In other words, these individuals do not feel adequate and allowed to participate to the activities of the political field (Bourdieu, 2000). This hypothesis seems to be falsified by the results arising from my research in the field. In Calabria in fact the people belonging to the 'dominated classes' as well, those subjects with little economical, cultural and social capital, feel the right to participate to the political activities, in order to maintain the patronage favours that, by consequence of the parties' crisis, still allow the entering in the field of politics of 'vote-bearer' subjects, even if devoid of competence and knowledge.

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reasons and rules: either you adapt, either you're out. At least on the appearances' level, no escape from such an overruling determinism is admitted. In the politicians' behaviour within the field the passive side of their *habitus*¹⁰ prevails. Their survival within the political microcosm is, indeed, determined by the field itself. The field restricts the active side of the *habitus* (that is the subject's reflective faculty and the capability to elaborate the context of its situation) to a strictly subordinate position. The field, I believe, performs the situations' arrangement job (*framework*) within which the politicians are supposed to act. And from the field itself the politicians receive the key to the management of each situation (*keying*). Within the political field the *habitus* allows the subjects very little openings and improvisation possibilities towards the world: it keeps them very tightly within itself, till the point that it can exactly predict their behaviour. It seems to me that the field generates a double process of habituation and homologation to its own dynamics. As if the political agents became a mass: an ensemble of puppets whose wires are managed by the field itself. In the observed subjects, the reflective sphere is indeed minimal. They seem affected by syndrome from immunodeficiency generated in their organism by the political field. Imagination seems

¹⁰ By *habitus* Bourdieu means how the subject relate to the world and, by consequence, the way he acts within it. Every single subject during his life gradually reaches an *habitus*, reshaping it any time according to the passed experiences. The *habitus* has a double tie in its development: on the one hand it depends upon the field structure within which it takes shape (passive tie); on the other it is the main detector allowing the subject to perceive the world and behave accordingly (active tie). According to Bourdieu, the *habitus* corresponds to the subject's personality translated in the social side: it corresponds to how the subject will behave, to which decisions he will make, to the practices he will adopt in his life, because thus educated, thus formed according to certain rules, thus socialized. The *habitus*, according to Bourdieu's theory, allows the subject to open and improvise in relation to the world and at the same time it bounds the subject to the world very firmly (Bourdieu, 1997, 1992, 1972). We could say that, if the field represents, according to Bourdieu, the position of the agent subject, by *habitus* we mean his disposition to act in the world. Nevertheless according to this latter definition the *habitus* can reach the form of what is ordinary, what is given for granted. We act automatically, with no reflection on what we are doing, since such is the habit and the practice of action, that we feel no need to think about it.

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to disappear. Subjectivity is set apart, buried under the suffocating cover of every-day roles. A Mayor speaks as follows:

I perceive the political space as something absolutely estranging, as something that removes you from yourself, from your true being, from your identity. I perceive the political space as inhabited by souls, not guided by the public or collective spirit, but paying attention exclusively to their personal growth. From this point of view I consider the political space, especially in Calabria, as deprived of substance. (f, 41).

Although the reflective sphere represents, according to Bourdieu, the sacred fire that should guide human action; but within the political field of such a fire, as it seems, only embers are left. Moreover, although the idea of *habitus* certainly is not, according to the French sociologist, a cage denying any freedom, it seems to me, observing from within, that the political field, if it is not a cage, it really looks like one, considering the little freedom it leaves to its adherents. According to Bourdieu, «this sense of the political game is what makes possible the negation of compromise, the silence on what we normally would say, the discreet protection of friends, the relations with the public opinion, etc.» (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 60).

On this matter, during my experiences of *shadowing*, I formulated for the political subjects a botanical metaphor. Let's think about a greenhouse, within which there is an artificial heat and where reconstructed light shines. Now: the political field looks like the greenhouse, with his roof and his hermetic locks, with its life timetables, its everyday-life always identical day after day. Those who live within the field are the

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natural products grown in the greenhouse: they scrupulously follow the microcosm's rules, they live according to pre-established timetables, they respect their zone of influence according to a previously made division and nobody dares to invade the others environment. Within the greenhouse, as within the field, there is a tacit respect of an agreement. There are shared rules and shared everyday habits assuring the existence of everyone breathing under the artificial tent. This is why, when an exception occurs, when, that is, someone overcome its own zone of belonging, all the microcosm makes him to go back or, even worst, uprootes the ill plant from the cheerful artificial galaxy. What happens if one of the greenhouse decide to 'go and breath some fresh air' outside the artificial tent? He would have a short life in front of him, since the *habitat* is vital for its survival. The autonomy of the subjects outside the field is, in fact, very limited. They live and reproduce exclusively within the political *frame*. The exit from this frame of reference is possible just few times a year (see the election time), shortly and just few hours a week. As a scuba diver plunging in deep waters with no oxygen bottle, thus the politician makes breath-held diving outside his habitat of influence. He necessitates to go back within the field and breath together with his fellows. Experience is circumscribed.

It seems to me that if you do not share and respect the rules within the field, you risk to be excluded from it. Maybe this is why none of the interviewed subjects shows great will in changing the state of affairs: the field is like this, its rules are clear and to modify them it is not an easy task.

Although the field lives in a permanent tension between opening and closure (he can never became fully autonomous, otherwise it would disappear), its binding power

towards who act within it comes out to be a behavioural imperative. Either you adapt to it, either you're *out*.

Bourdieu's hypothesis finds here an empirical checking, at least in the specific context of the Calabrian political professionalism.

The political field, structured and structuring, binds the subjects to the respect of its rules. No way out from this determinism seems to be, at the moment, taken into account.

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