

# Italian Elite Groups at Work: A View from the Urban Grassroots

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[journals.sagepub.com/home/dio](https://journals.sagepub.com/home/dio)**Italo Pardo**

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**Abstract**

Western elite groups' moralities and actions can and should be studied empirically. Contrary to belief held in the 1980s in mainstream social anthropology that fieldwork in the classic anthropological fashion could not be done among the western elite, the findings of long-term research in this field have yielded key ethnographic insights leading to academic and public debate. In this article I draw on ethnographic research on legitimacy, power, and governance among key Neapolitan elite groups to offer reflections on a style of governance that has at once engendered and thrived on the blurring of the dividing line between what is legitimate and what is not legitimate in public life. The discussion focuses on powerful, tightly networked groups that, inspired by an elitist philosophy of power, have been hard at work to gain and maintain power, while losing trust and authority. The analysis builds towards an understanding of their implosion and of the corresponding erosion of the relationship between citizenship and governance.

**Keywords**

ethnographic study of elite groups, power, trust, authority, governance, disciplinary prejudice

Believing that western elite groups' moralities and actions should and could be studied empirically, in the early 1990s I started my field research on legitimacy, power, and governance among key Neapolitan elite groups. Elsewhere (Pardo, 2012a) I have illustrated how this and similar experiences as a social anthropologist interested in western urban settings have raised questions on the vagaries in the development of science, and particularly on the extent to which new knowledge on any given subject can (or is allowed to) be acquired. As a case in point, contrary to belief in mainstream social anthropology that fieldwork in the classic anthropological fashion could not be done among the western elite, the findings of long-term research in this field have yielded key ethnographic insights leading to meaningful academic and public debate.

The present article<sup>1</sup> develops reflections on a style of governance that has at once engendered and thrived on the blurring of the dividing line between what is legitimate and what is not legitimate

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in public life. The discussion focuses on powerful, tightly networked groups that, inspired by an elitist philosophy of power, have been hard at work to gain and maintain power, while losing trust and authority. The discussion builds towards an understanding of their implosion and of the corresponding erosion of the relationship between citizenship and governance.

### Empirical research among the élite

The ever-increasing gap between citizenship and governance across Europe points to the importance of gaining empirical knowledge on how dominant groups manage power and relate to the rest of society. What may seem pretty much a moot point today struck me as a critical issue when I started my research in the early 1990s. Important questions needed to be answered. First, what was the exact relationship of rulers' actual practices to ordinary people's culture and actions? Second, how did rulers' ideas about economic democracy influence actual policies? Third, what aspects of the system encouraged or generated illicit practices and what aspects could instead generate or help to generate real change? Wary of claims that moral themes are basically an opportunistic veneer for the pursuit of profit (monetary, political, and symbolic), I wanted to penetrate in depth the nature of voluntary action. I wanted to understand how concepts of "right" and "wrong" and "good" and "evil" were understood and made to operate, for this level of analysis is crucial in any study of the significance of people's fundamental sense of identity in their acts of will and, ultimately, in the way in which society is organized.

I chose to start my research in Naples on methodological and theoretical grounds. I had established useful contacts there through long-term research, and this major city exemplifies problems of urban life found across South Italy and elsewhere in Europe and the industrial West. The major events of *tangentopoli* (literally, kick-back city) that, having started in Milan, were sweeping the entire country and the corresponding local dynamics dictated that I should start with focusing on the political arena, which linked nicely with my previous field research.

Throughout the first eighteen-month fieldwork, it became increasingly clear that empirical research among élite groups was going to be necessarily "multi-sited"; simply, because many informants' networks and dealings at once included and reached well outside the local level, regionally, nationally, and internationally. Elite groups were interconnected professionally, socially, and often through complex kinship networks (including marriage and godparenthood). Following these connections in Naples and beyond within and without the groups in which I was interested was a key aspect of my research. The findings from this initial fieldwork stimulated further ethnographic investigation.

Several prolonged fieldwork-based studies followed among people who are prominent in important sectors of society: politics; the trade-unions; the media; the business community (particularly small and medium-sized businesses); the judiciary; the professions (especially the banking, medical, and legal professions) and the intelligentsia. Each fieldwork focused on one of these élite groups, naturally extending, in a controlled fashion, to their relevant networks in other sectors. In each fieldwork I used a combination of documentary research, observation, prolonged interviews, and informal conversations with key witnesses. Whenever possible, I participated in relevant events, formal and informal, private and public. At each preliminary stage, I took stock of relevant quantitative material (demographic and other statistical data, census returns, surveys and so on) and studied relevant speeches, historical material, briefs, media archives, judicial inquiries, and sentences. I also consulted other important documents, often unpublished, such as research reports and private correspondence and archives. Seldom applied to the study of the élite, such a combination has produced good ethnography.

In Italy the ethnographer's task is notoriously complicated by ever-multiplying judicial inquiries. One major issue was the level of cooperation that I would be able to obtain in what at times was a toxic scenario. There were, of course, interesting, sometimes sinister but informative implications to the refusal to be interviewed expressed by some politicians and businessmen who were under judicial inquiry. Equally serious questions were raised by those who were all-too-willing to cooperate 'in order to put the record straight', by giving their version. I also found that much could be learned from those who were 'committed to doing something useful' for their 'beloved city'. Raising an important point in political anthropology (Prato, 1993; 2000), these influential people's questioning of the legitimacy of old-style modes of action fostered the self-criticism of some established parties and their attempt to change their image. They cooperated, saying that serious work in this field badly needed to be done.

It has been argued that the ethnographer can collect precious information among the less visible (marginal) élite and 'grey eminences'. Notwithstanding obvious difficulties, particularly when dealing with what my informant described as 'delicate issues' – such as corruption, abuse of power in public office, politicking and so on (see Pardo, 2000b; 2004) – I have enjoyed a high degree of cooperation both among these people and, interestingly, among those who occupy positions of power, their concern with confidentiality finding a satisfactory answer in my promise (and proven practice) to use fictitious names and, when necessary, controlled scrambling of the most recognizable situations.

Cooperation increased, and my network of significant informants snowballed accordingly, as I became more involved in the processes observed and people became more familiar with me and my research, thus easing the relational and symbolic problems (Bourdieu, 1993: 907ff.) between interviewer and interviewee. A distinctive characteristic of anthropology as a discipline is that fieldworkers go and *live* among the people they study; they do not just carry out participant observation at specific times. I took residence as close as possible to where many local élites live, socialize, and in some cases work. Having gained knowledge of 'the context' in which key actors operated and of their relationship with, and use of, their social and cultural environment, I focused on their family life and patterns of socialization and leisure, their religious and other cultural performances, and their professional and political activities.

In each case, during the first months in the field I adapted and fine-tuned my empirical methods, intensified documentary research, and expanded my contacts among the group on which I was focusing, with particular reference to people who, based locally, exerted power and influence in and beyond the local level and to people who opposed those in power. Gradually, I also began to select key people for in-depth case studies. A way – only apparently eclectic (Parry, 1969: 118) – to identify key informants is to use a combination of local people's indications (the 'reputational' approach) and of the objective role of each individual (the 'decision-making' approach). I have found that this technique can be greatly improved by the fieldworker's own knowledge of the setting. As participant observation intensified, I carried out one- to two-hour non-structured interviews with informants of both sexes and, in a number of cases, with their kin and significant friends. I asked open-ended questions on the relationship between personal and political morality and resources in critical political processes. This was a key issue because the uneasiness and difficulties that often underscored this relationship emerged as the most important single element in the tensions between rulers and ordinary citizens. I asked specific questions about moral and behavioural issues which were central to my research, and indeed to the developing situation. I

enquired into the significance given to family origins, career, personal interests, loyalties, ambitions, and investments (monetary and non-monetary) in the informants' own future and that of their children; but also into the nature and role played, in their lives, by religious and non-religious belief and spiritual values.

Participant observation involved sharing a variety of formal and informal situations with my privileged informants and their networks. In time, in a sense with the benefit of hindsight, some of these situations – appropriately identified as behind-the-scenes processes in the 'corridors of power' – turned out to have been determinant stages in the emerging élite's strategies to power; others played an important role in the established élites' consolidation of their positions; still others were crucial in bringing down powerful people.

Interviewing also people at the receiving end of decision-making, I asked questions to clarify why some rulers' actions were received as unjust and morally illegitimate in the wider society. I did so bearing in mind that corrupt practices in public life were exposed by judicial enquiries into domains as different as the health service and public administration and that there was an increase in policies that, described as moralizing, had a punitive effect on (widespread) activities that took place at the margins or outside the boundaries of law but could not be described as truly criminal (Pardo, 1995).

The case studies of relevant events paid attention to the empirical reality of what were seen to be the dominant élite's self-serving actions, authoritarian methods in decision-making and populist policies that responded to the demands of ideology and politicking. The situations in which I collected the ethnography have also been the object of analysis. Comparing and contrasting information collected through the different methods of enquiry and the analysis of documentary material has helped to identify key aspects, across the social spectrum, of the relationship between rhetorical claims and actual practices.

Over a little more than two decades, the empirical study of these processes has helped to clarify the relations among key élite groups and between them and ordinary citizens, contributing to our understanding of the forces that are shaping contemporary Italy. Ethnographic evidence has brought out a diversified picture of the widening gap between the élite's interests, moralities, and actions and the rest of society. The analysis has gradually built towards an understanding of significant variations in the balance of power as it sheds light on the nature, complexity, and extension of élite networks and on the relationship between politics, law, and legislation. A forthcoming monograph brings to a head complex ethnographic insights on the nature and scope of personal and corporate motivations and choices that are playing a determinant role in the new economic, social, and cultural identity of this region. Here, I shall focus on the dynamics of governing through selective interests.

## Governing through selective interests

Since the early 1990s, Naples has epitomized an especially problematic version of the difficult relationship between politics, civil society, and the law that in Europe marks the gap between rulers and the ruled, critically between citizenship and governance (Pardo & Prato, 2010). In 1993, the 'ex'-Communists won the local election, by a narrow margin, against their neo-Fascist opponents. In terms of a functioning democratic system, and order (Lively, 1975; Stanckiewicz, 1980), that electoral success was built on critical anomalies. Specifically, it was built on the blurring of the classic Montesquieuan division of power in the legislative and executive branches and the

judiciary in the democratic state that marked Italy in the early 1990s, and in many ways, continues to do so. One such anomaly was that, although Italy could still be called a democracy, at that historical juncture political competition had become in fact non-existent both at central level and at local level. The *tangentopoli* scandal had wiped out all the major parties with the exception of the Communist Party – the largest in the West – and the electorally irrelevant neo-Fascists.<sup>2</sup> Such a situation was the direct product of another anomaly, whereby sections of the judiciary had *de facto* taken over a key aspect of the political process as they had roughly and selectively carried out a witch-hunt, emasculating political competition but, we now know, failing to deliver the convictions of many of the accused.<sup>3</sup> This needs explanation.

The Communists, now in the Democratic Party, have long been engaged in implementing their understanding of Gramsci's ideas (1971) on the establishment of hegemony in key domains of power and the attendant theory of a 'historic bloc' (borrowed from George Sorel): a nexus of institutions and social relations aimed at establishing hegemony. They have traditionally enjoyed dominance among the intelligentsia, combining efficiently with a belief in holding a monopoly over higher ideals, a superior morality, and society-oriented and modern values. Meanwhile, they have established themselves in key positions in banking and business. Most important, since the early 1970s a section of the judiciary have adopted this political project. Tamar Pitch (1983) has aptly described the early development of the explicit political commitment of a large and influential section of the Italian judiciary that formally started in the mid-1970s, as 'a left-wing grouping of magistrates emerged in 1968, denouncing the isolation of the system from society and proclaiming the non-neutrality of law and its administration' (Pitch, 1983: 122). Over the years, this initially tiny group has grown into what today amounts to the largest proportion of this key power in the democratic state. Outstanding events in Italian public life amply demonstrate that critically important decision-makers find such a situation convenient.

### **Slanted governance, ad hoc legislation**

The newly elected Naples Communists promised to bring about a new moral order and prosperity. Having carried out fieldwork when these events were unfolding, ten years later, and again more recently, I thought it could be useful to find out what had become of those promises. I re-interviewed my informants; they are ordinary Neapolitans, as well as members of the listed elite groups.

In the early 1990s, Neapolitans from various walks of life expressed complex and nuanced views. Although wary of ideologues and distant from Communism, many businessmen, professionals, magistrates, intellectuals who had not partaken in the bonanza brought about by the previous, highly questionable, Centre-Left style of government,<sup>4</sup> felt that, in the circumstances, any change would probably be better than no change. They worried about having to put up with ideological zeal but also felt that the situation could offer new opportunities and a much needed improvement of public life. Repeatedly patronized and disillusioned in the past, now they hoped to see their new rulers' promise of a renaissance of the city come to fruition.

As my informants point out, not only did many improvements made in 1994 fade away but most people continue (resentfully, I have widely found) to have to endure much more than their fair share of the risks and difficulties that characterize urban life in the West. Critics maintain that the infamous 'rubbish problem'<sup>5</sup> makes one, glaring example of the decay of Naples' urban environment. In their view, rulers badly need to address the city's structural deficiencies, huge debt (with contractors and the banks), and budgetary, environmental (particularly rubbish disposal and

conversion into energy) and public health (mainly caused by the recurrent rubbish crises) problems. Instead, they have been seen to be engaged in a self-serving use of the urban environment and of their power in the political arena, and to embody a style of governance that is suspicious of the individual and engaged in clientelism. Let us look briefly at these last two issues.

In South Italy, when public funds have not been misappropriated through corruption, they have been systematically used for instrumental, short-term goals. More precisely, they have been used for assistance, as opposed to investment (Prato, 1993; Pardo, 1996), prompting influential local scholars to formulate a theory of ‘eternal re-starting’ (De Vivo, 2006). In such an adverse situation, most manage to make a living, achieve an education, and stay healthy. Many draw on their culture of *sapé fa* (literally, cleverness), basically informed by a strong emphasis on pooling *all* personal resources (monetary and non-monetary) in the pursuit of goals and of betterment. In economic terms, this often translates into establishing or expanding *independent* small-scale enterprises through mobilization of information and network.<sup>6</sup> Such small businesses are mostly rooted in the informal sector, beyond the limits of the strictly legal (a predicament resented by many as difficult and problematic, mired in anxiety and uncertainty),<sup>7</sup> but generally address the market as a whole. A variety of small to medium-range legal firms rely on workshops that produce goods illegally, evading tax on the purchase of raw materials and on the sale of finished products, as well as employment tax and other welfare state contributions. Vindicating the point that the formal and the informal are part of the same market and, indeed, interact, a sizeable proportion of such products finds its way into the legal market (Pardo, 2012b).

Entrepreneurship is, however, frustrated by overcomplicated regulation and by significant difficulties in gaining formal access to capital.<sup>8</sup> Access to credit is, of course, a key right of citizenship, particularly in the western liberal variant of democracy (Hyland, 1995: Chapter 5); the difficulty marking this ‘right’ in this ethnography requires attention. Riding on the back of the negative stereotype of Southerners as untrustworthy people slanted to illegality and corruption,<sup>9</sup> bank interest rates are consistently higher than in the Centre-North.<sup>10</sup> Further distortions are engendered by overpriced banking, bureaucratic complication and inefficiency, procedural demands, and dubious dealings.<sup>11</sup> Such restrictions combine with the more ordinary difficulties that generally characterize the process of starting, carrying on, or expanding a business. As I have repeatedly witnessed, people cope as best as they can. When they cannot buy money officially, they use their personal networks; only as a last resort do they borrow from moneylenders, for here the considerable risks – financial, moral, and otherwise<sup>12</sup> – implicit in usury, i.e. credit transactions that carry excessive charges (Salin, 1949: 193), are recognized across the social spectrum.

Not only are local entrepreneurs thus penalized but, following an established pattern (Pardo, 1993), major contracts for public work are granted to non-Southern firms,<sup>13</sup> while arguments are made in favour of transplanting to the South models of entrepreneurship and business cooperation which pre-existed, and then developed in a mutually supporting relationship with Communist rule in the Centre-North. This failure to come to terms with Southern entrepreneurial culture is one aspect of a difficult relationship between rulers and the ruled that is worsened by questionable politics, strengthening the widespread feeling among Neapolitans that they are second-class Italians. A morally problematic, politically worrying, and economically disruptive affair is exemplary.

Extending the stigma of ‘untrustworthiness’ to entrepreneurs who had contracted work with the previous administration, Naples’ leftist rulers have gone to great lengths to avoid paying their legitimate dues. Moreover, they have censured those entrepreneurs on the moral grounds that they



supped with the devil (what they describe as their corrupt predecessors) using a very short spoon. Yet, as the membership of the Creditors' Association<sup>14</sup> clearly suggests, most are ordinary entrepreneurs who describe themselves as honest people who have fulfilled their contract trusting that their counterparts were reliable, public bodies; they knew, as one of them said, that 'public institutions are encumbered by slow and inscrutable procedures, but it would be reasonable to expect such important, public customers to pay the work done'. That this has not happened needs attention.

Mirroring locally a national problem that is currently the object of much fought-over proposed legislation on payment of dues to companies that have executed work for public bodies, these administrators repeatedly postponed paying their creditors through a combination of strong-arm tactics, soothing language, red tape, bureaucratic buck-passing, and legal wrangling that exemplifies the exaggerated significance of bureaucracy to politics in contemporary society (Smith, 1987; Beetham, 1987; Herzfeld, 1992; Pardo, 1996: Chapter 6). Meanwhile, drawing on their power in the major party in the central government coalition, they pressurized the legislative body into giving them standing ground through ad hoc legislation that emphasizes the moral relativism of law (Fuller, 1964; Saltman, 1985) as a coercive apparatus that regulates the partial control of a partial order (Moore, 1978; Starr & Collier, 1989). Such legislation made rulers not responsible for the debts contracted by their predecessors; it also transferred a large part of legal responsibility from politicians to committees of non-elected experts who would assess the amount of debt and, then, suggest feasible ways to repay it, including raising money by selling the council's 'non-crucial assets'. Generating judicial proceedings, important assets were sold but the money has not been used to repay debt (Montefusco, 1997: 57–62).

Feeling victimized, and often finding themselves in deep financial trouble and consequently excluded from the market, creditors approached the judiciary for help in their struggle to re-establish their right to justice; a fundamental, that is, of citizenship (Marshall, 1950; Dahrendorf, 1996: 37ff.; Rees, 1996). They did so individually and through the aforementioned association, which they have set up 'in the hope', they say, 'of gaining strength'. Their actions highlight administrative behaviour fraught with important omissions (Stanckiewicz, 1980) in the exercise of democratic rule. And yet, there is more.

Regardless of the obvious need to address – structurally – this situation, large funds from central government,<sup>15</sup> and recently also from the EU, have been used to implement weak development schemes, contributing to entrenching official poverty while fuelling clientelism and corruption. Systematically practised in the past,<sup>16</sup> such tactics were perfected by leftist administrators (Della Corte, 2007; Di Feo, 2008). The above-described leftist style of governance pragmatically nurtured clienteles across the board. At lower levels, this is exemplified by the case, under judicial investigation, of 2,316 unemployed people (some are ex-convicts on rehabilitation programmes) hired by the Special Commissioner for Waste<sup>17</sup> during one of the rubbish crises to clear the accumulated waste. By their own admission, these employees have never actually worked and, although their contract was officially temporary, after a number of years they continue to be employed and, as one of them said, 'to be paid 1,200 euros per month to idle away the working day' (see also Demarco, 2007: 194–197).<sup>18</sup> However, the current version of clientelism is a kind of favouritism and nepotism that relies heavily (some say, mainly) on the purchased (with money or by other means) loyalty of networked elite groups (Pardo, 2001; Amaturro, 2003), as opposed to the purchased loyalty of the masses. For example, a larger number of prominent experts and intellectuals than ever before have benefited from lucrative 'consultancies'.<sup>19</sup> In some cases, such consultancies have

been inexistent, though highly paid (Demarco, 2007: 210); more often they have been pointless (Della Corte, 2007: 39–53 and 143–147). Businessmen and women have been granted privileged access to public contracts in various sectors, from public building to the health service, from public transport to waste management and so on (Della Corte, 2007; Demarco, 2007). Bureaucrats have been favoured by administrative blindness and, for a time quite efficiently, through repeated changes in the law. These distortions of public responsibility bring out a point effectively made by Prato (2000: 79), for these bureaucrats have thus become *de facto* ‘politicians of low moral standing’ (Weber, 1974: 95), and, bringing vividly to mind a most critical point raised by Prato, those ‘bureaucrats who maintain a moral standing of “impartiality” are in fact regarded as “irresponsible politicians”’ (Prato, 2000: 79).

When questioned, many Neapolitans feel as indignant as those who are directly affected by actions made legal by new legislation but which they resent as morally illegitimate. As trust between ordinary people and their rulers has been further weakened, the situation has deteriorated. With graded sophistication, my informants reckon that the described style of governance begs critical questions of obligation and entitlement, fundamentally undermining their citizenship. Such interference with the law and its production, such distortion of the difficult relationship between legal responsibility and moral and political responsibility appear particularly problematic in the Naples situation because, here, far from being caught in a culture of short-term moves and immediate goals, the ruled are seen to be actively engaged in negotiating the redefinition of their citizenship. Underlying central issues in current debates on civil society (Hann, 1996) and citizenship (Bulmer & Rees, 1996), their actions show a determination in defying the distrust and misgovernance of a questionable élite.

## Second-class citizens still vote: powerful élite groups implode

The ethnography that I have discussed shows how Naples’ leftist rulers have rhetorically opposed assistance and clientelism in words while practising both in deeds and, patently driven by the aforementioned Gramscian paradigm, they have made the urban environment work for the purpose of establishing hegemony and teaching citizens ‘true’ values. Over time, however, they have been seen to encapsulate administrative weakness, bureaucratic inefficiency, selective policies, and moral and criminal corruption alongside manipulation of the law, expedient interference in the process of legislation, and complex illegal practices. Not only has their governance thus fundamentally lost legitimacy; far more worryingly, the *principle* of governance has been seriously undermined.

Case-material and participant observation have helped to understand such mismanagement of power in public office raising important questions on objective conditions of restriction and inequality and pointing to ordinary people’s ability to negotiate these conditions. Here, the difficult relationship between politics, law, and the broader society that mars western life has emerged to rely on aspects of the system (for example, *sottogoverno*, subgovernment)<sup>20</sup> that encourage or generate illicit practices. However, quite beyond the straightforward illegality of certain élite actions (see, for example, Pardo, 2004), fundamental problems are raised by the ruling élite’s approach to ordinary people’s morality and styles of citizenship. Reflection of such problems stimulates fresh thinking on value, responsibility, and representation, and on significant changes in the credentials and dynamics of power and control.

Naples’ powerful rulers have long enjoyed dominance despite their failure truly to adopt a pluralist approach to social and cultural relations and their refusal to acknowledge local human



resources and culture that have much potential but disagree with their rhetoric. The elections of 2011 marked the end of their rule. Having grown increasingly aware of these rulers' misgovernance and corrupt use of power, people voted them out of power both at regional and city level. This comprehensive debacle at the polls highlights a central problem in the dynamics of democratic government, proving that lack of responsibility and superimposition of a political rhetoric on good governance eventually leads to people's distrust of those in power. Problematically, in Naples, 'alternative' candidates from minor parties with no political experience or programme have turned out to be the main beneficiaries. Their election to run the City Council must be read in the worrying context of a long-absent serious opposition to Leftist rule<sup>21</sup> and of Neapolitans' widespread disaffection with mainstream politics and politicians, abundantly demonstrated by a relatively very low turn at the polls.<sup>22</sup>

## Conclusion

Current events in Naples graphically mirror events taking place elsewhere in Europe. Perhaps predictably, the implosion of the powerful governance that I have described does not appear to have been paralleled by the demise of their elitist philosophy of power. This invites the sobering conclusion that while such implosion suggests that a healthy democratic rule cannot afford to delegitimize people's values, beliefs, and life styles, misgovernance, particularly misgovernance that draws on basically undemocratic principles, may well continue to thrive with the support of skilful spin. However, as testified by the Naples case, in the long run such practice does engender citizens' distrust of key democratic institutions. We have seen how powerful elite groups have enjoyed dominance benefiting from a growing ambiguity in the definition of what constitutes illegitimate behaviour in public life. As the recent (May 2014) electoral results across Europe have graphically highlighted, the implications and ramifications of this kind of distrust reach far beyond the implosion of local elite groups. The empirical investigation of these processes – as we have seen, most strongly observable in the urban set-up – has helped us to understand the serious danger they pose to the democratic order and the European project, which testifies to the unique contribution that anthropology has to offer.

## Notes

1. Parts of the present article rely on my previous work (see especially Pardo, 2012a).
2. The Forza Italia movement did not exist at the time. Interestingly, since it was founded in 1994, it never managed to root itself significantly in the Naples area.
3. Through a huge media campaign, all were, nonetheless, discredited and ejected from public life. Recent developments, widely reported in the national media (*Il Giornale*, *La Repubblica*, *Il Corriere della Sera*, June 2011–2014) exemplify a crude repetition of those events. A diachronic reading of the post-*tangentopoli* situation and an informed examination of current headline-grabbing inquiries suggest that, long on improbable theorems and exceedingly short on proof, such judicial performances may well have high media appeal (on such misuse of the power of the media, see Ruffo, 1998; 2011) but all too often either they do not go to trial or the accused are acquitted. Thus, reputations are ruined and justice is not served.
4. The Christian Democrats and Socialists had long ruled Naples and Campania on their own or as allies.
5. I have offered an extended empirical analysis of the development and key aspects of this crisis (Pardo, 2010), which has now motivated the EU to impose a hefty fine. National and local newspapers provide ample information on its current outlook. On this scandal see, for example, Senato della Repubblica (2007); Procura della Repubblica, Naples (2008), and Chiariello (2008).
6. Of course, people's actions do not always extend to entrepreneurship. However, as I have fully explained elsewhere (Pardo, 1996), such a concept of *sapè fa* invariably informs their distinction between *lavoro*

(work; work activities that are rewarding and promising for the future) and *fatica* (toil; unrewarding and unpromising work activities).

7. The nature of the informal sector makes a quantitative assessment extremely difficult. However, it may be useful to mention that, according to the Italian Institute of Statistics, in 2008 the economic value of the informal sector was between 255 and 275 billion euro; between, that is, 16.3 and 17.5 of GDP. According to the report published in 2005 by SVIMEZ, in Campania the informal sector accounted for 23 per cent of the economy. In 2010 the number of southerners of working age involved in the informal sector of the economy was estimated to be roughly six million (SVIMEZ, 2010: 8).
8. On the complexity of access to credit in the South see Pardo (2000a) and Camera dei Deputati (1998).
9. For an articulated critique of such stereotyping, see Pardo (1996).
10. In recent times they have been between 2.5 and 5 per cent higher.
11. Some bank officials refer unsuccessful applicants to private credit agencies that grant credit easily and at high interest (Pardo, 2000a). Entrepreneurs describe the various schemes aimed at addressing this situation as weakly drafted and badly implemented. As a recent research report suggests, the situation keeps worsening (Confcommercio, 2011).
12. For example, loan sharks can become notoriously violent, involving the borrower and his or her family.
13. Examples abound of such companies subsequently sub-contracting to Southern firms, which actually carry out the work.
14. Creditors are organized in the ‘*Comitato dei creditori degli enti locali territoriali in dissesto finanziario*’ (literally, Committee of Creditors of Bankrupt Local Administrations). See also Montefusco (1997: 3ff. and 71ff.).
15. For example, those obtained through the Cassa del Mezzogiorno (Stella, 2001).
16. Famously, by the Christian Democrats in the 1960s and 1970s. Elsewhere I have reviewed key literature in this debate (Pardo, 1996).
17. Since 1994, six people have held this office, which is an ‘extraordinary’ measure taken by central government to deal with extraordinary circumstances (for example, earthquakes, floods, and other environmental disasters and so on). It involves a powerful mandate, financial resources, and a broad scope for action.
18. These ‘workers’ cost approximately 55 million euros per year, so far amounting to a total of 145 million euros (Della Corte, 2007: Chapter 4; Iovene and Lombardi, 2008: 164–172). This kind of clientelism continues to plague local administration; for a current example, see *Corriere del Mezzogiorno*, 28/07/2014.
19. For example, the cost of consultancies on urban waste (Pardo, 2010) amounts to almost 9 million euros.
20. In her seminal work, Prato (1993) has offered an enlightening analysis of this complex aspect of Italian politics.
21. Yet again, the locally fractured Centre-Right failed to propose strong candidates for the local election.
22. Quite unusually for Italy, only 50.37 per cent of the electorate turned out at the polls.

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