DIFFERENT TYPES OF CAPITALS MOBILIZED TO STRENGTHEN LOCAL POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

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─Abstract ─

Bourdieu founds his sociology of field on different types of capitals- namely economic, social, cultural and symbolic capitals- that need to be mobilized by social agents in order to dominate one specific field. According to Bourdieu, society is divided into various fields, such as political field, education, gender, art or economical fields, and each one constituting an arena of struggle of domination. In modern and fragmented societies, economic capital is no longer sufficient to dominate one field; social agents or groups has to therefore invest other type(s) of capital which is suitable for the field to be dominated. For instance, in order to dominate in the political field, it would be assumed that one should invest both social and symbolic capitals, which to be transformed into the "political capital".

This study aims to argue the role of local political leaders in the context of above described Bourdieuan framework of "capital". More precisely, the study departs from the question "which types of capital do local political leaders (mayors) mobilize in dominating local political decision-making processes?" In order to respond to question, a field study has been conducted in Edirne, focusing on the local political decision-making processes and the dominating role of the mayor during these processes. Conducting the field study in a city where an opposition political party mayor is in force helps to identify more clearly the social and symbolic types of capitals mobilized by the mayor, since it would be undoubtedly stated that the political power of the mayor does not depend on central government. Local political decision-making processes in Edirne have been analyzed via in-depth interviews carried out with local politicians, bureaucrats, journalists and NGO representatives. Additionally, local press and local council decisions have been analyzed. Locally rooted social capital (local networks and relations) has significant impact on the political power of the mayor, as well as the symbolic capital he mobilizes via populist discourses and political attitudes that would be considered within the concept of "charismatic leadership".

Keywords: *Local political leadership, Local decision-making, Social capital, Bourdieu*

JEL Classification: K

1. INTRODUCTION

This study aims to discuss establishment of local political leadership within the framework of "political field" and "social capital" in Bourdieuan terms. It bases on a field study conducted in a medium-scale city in Turkey (Edirne), where the mayor, who would be considered as the local political leader, serves his office since 1989 with interruption of one period of elections between 1999-2004. Bourdieu's sociology of field and his concept of "capital" serves as theoretical framework of the study, in order to discuss founding elements and attributes of his leadership. Before analyzing the data acquired from the field study, the theoretical framework will be briefly described in two parties; the first focusing on the different "forms of capitals", the second specifically on "political field and political capital".

1.1. Forms of Capital in Bourdieuan Conceptualization

Pierre Bourdieu's sociology discusses that the society is fragmented in "fields" – such as economic, political, cultural, education, sports, etc. fields- each one operating according to its indigenous dynamics. For Bourdieu, fields present themselves as structured spaces of social positions. The properties of these positions depend on their position within these fields (Bourdieu,1993:72); a field is defined by "specific issues and interests, which cannot be reduced to the specific issues and interests of other fields" (Firdion,2005:2). Societal agents operating in these "*fragmented social microcosmoses*" struggle with each other to dominate the field. Dominant social groups, who have accumulated more capital due to their early participation to the field, have defensive reflexes against "new comers", in order to maintain their dominant positions in the field. During this struggle for domination by social actors, power is exercised by deploying the appropriate form of capital to the field. Every field is thus constructed around a specific form of capital, which is unevenly distributed among social agents (De Jong,2001:70).

The concept of capital constitutes one of the core concepts of Bourdieuan analysis, since it signifies the appropriate resources to be accumulated by social groups in order to gain or maintain the domination of the relevant field. If one is to identify and explain the structure and dynamics of differentiated societies, (s)he needs to consider that capital would take various forms other than the economic

one. According to Bourdieu, capital is presented in mainly three sub-divisible forms: economic, cultural, and social. *Economic capital* is the form that is directly linked to Marxist approach of economical capital accumulation and possession of means of production. *Cultural capital* on the other hand, describes the resources acquired through access to cultural accumulation, information, legitimation, and denotation relevant to the field. This second form of capital, along with the economic capital, builds hierarchy and causes inequality in fields. In certain conditions, it is convertible into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications (Bourdieu,1986:242). As for the social capital, it is the "aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" An agent's social capital depends on the size of the network of connections (s)he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected These networks of social relations not only exist practically or materially, but also in symbolic state. They may also be socially instituted and guaranteed by the application of a common name, such as being a member of a certain family, class, tribe, school, or a party (Bourdieu,1986:247). Social capital in Bourdieuan terms would be thus briefly defined as the sum of real and potential resources that a social agent acquires due to his/her possession of permanent networks of relationship and more or less institutionalized mutual acquaintances. After having identifying three main forms of capital, Bourdieu posts a fourth one –symbolic capital- in order to name the form that any of these three forms of capital takes when they are conceived through categories of perception (Bourdieu,2003:108). Put in other way, it is the recognition of a social agent and positive value attached to him/her by the other members of the field.

After having outlined Bourdieuan conceptualization of capital that constitutes a fundamental element of his "sociology of field", signification of the "political field" will be briefly discussed before proposing a framework to study local political field.

1.2. The Political Field and Political Capital

Bourdieu presents the political field, like any other field of the society, as a field of power (domination) and struggle, which aims to transform the power relations peculiar to the structure of the field in a given time (Bourdieu,1981:3). It is a structured space; each element of which is formed through the network of relationships that this element entertains with the other elements in the field

(Kauppi,2003:778). Any unit of the political system would be analyzed as a field: a political party, an international organization, a state, a local government, etc. It is the same structural principles as all fields that rule functioning of the political field. The power is exercised through acquisition and possession of the relevant capital in order to dominate the field.

Political capital is a category of symbolic capital, for which agents operating in the field compete with each other. A fundamental characteristic of the political field is that it is organized in two opposite poles: progressives versus conservative, right versus left, or the challengers versus incumbents (Kauppi,2003:778). This binary logic permeates the political field as a whole, not only shaping some units of the political system. Agents at the autonomous pole of the political field possess the most legitimate type of political capital, whereas agents at the heteronomous pole of the political field accumulate alternative types of political capital. The dominant have a lot of capital, the dominated relatively little. Through a process of socio mimesis, agents' political stances and political strategies follow their positions in the political field. As the field becomes more autonomous its internal mechanisms play a more central role in political activity (Kauppi,2003:779).

Bourdieu identifies two types of political capital: “individually acquired” and “acquired by delegation”. Individual political capital is either accumulated slowly or possessed due to an action in a situation of institutional void and crisis. The second condition suits with the Weberian concept of “charismatic legitimacy/ leadership”. Personal political capital tightly linked to the existence of the person; it disappears with the physical disappearance of the person holding this power. As for the “political capital acquired by delegation”, it is gained through investiture by an institution, for instance, a political party or other political enterprise. A person receives from the institution a limited and provisional transfer of collective capital composed of recognition and fidelity. Through this process, the capital is partly transformed from collective to personal. Political capital by delegation thus refers to a situation where the power of a politician depends on the power of the party or political institutions (s)he is involved in. The leader of the party controls access to this collective capital of the institution. (Kauppi,2003:779-780).

1.3. Research Focus and Method

This study aims to argue establishment and exercise of local political leadership in the Bourdieuan framework of “field” and “capital”. The main question of the study is formulated as “which types of capital do local political leaders (mayors) mobilize in dominating local political decision-making processes?”

In order to respond to the question, a field study has been conducted in Edirne, focusing on the local political decision-making processes and the dominating role of the mayor during these processes. Conducting the field study in a city where an opposition political party mayor is in force helps to identify more clearly the social and symbolic types of capitals mobilized by the mayor, since it would be undoubtedly stated that the political power of the mayor does not depend on central government. Local political decision-making processes and the leadership attributes of the mayor in Edirne have been interrogated via in-depth interviews carried out with local politicians including the mayor himself, bureaucrats, journalists, and local NGO representatives. Additionally, local press and local council meeting have been attended.

2. THE FIELD STUDY: POLITICAL PORTRAIT OF A LOCAL POLITICIAN

The focus of the field study conducted in Edirne is the local political leader of the city –the mayor- and his dominant role in local politics. Before starting to present results of the field study, it is necessary to discuss what the term "political leadership" implies. Burns defines leadership as "collectively purposeful causation" (Burns,1978:434). This definition comprises three core elements. Firstly, leadership is meaningful within a "purposeful activity" context. Secondly, leadership operates interactively with a body of followers. This implies existence of "leader-follower" interaction. Considered together with the first element, leadership involves a purposeful interaction between the leader and his/her followers. However this statement does not necessarily mean that the leader and the followers share the same goals (Stone,1995:97). Thirdly, leadership is a form of power or causation. Burns conceptualize this third element as "contribution to change", which is explained as "a way of making something happen that would otherwise not take place" (Burns,1978:427).

Leadership studies in urban literature are mostly empirical; field studies of mayor biographies. It is thus not easy to base a research on urban leadership on a wide theoretical framework on leadership. However, political leadership in urban studies has a significant place within the urban research domain. Urban development, strategies, policies are considered to be mostly dependent on the choices or networks of the local political leader.

Urban studies focusing on leadership are consisted mostly of the American experience, since it is highly decentralized form of government that presents more responsibilities and authority to mayors in determining urban policies, strategies and in problem-solving. Nevertheless, considering the issue within the framework

of "social" and "symbolic" capital that are accumulated through networks of relationships would present a valid approach even for highly centralized government systems as Turkey, where informal networks of relationship (i.e. patronage networks) are determinant in the political field. The study thus focuses on mobilization of these networks by the mayor in his control of the local political field.

2.1. Defining the Field: Local Political Leadership in Edirne

The field of the study is limited to the central district of the province: the city of Edirne. According to 2010 data calculated before parliamentary elections, the total population of Edirne province is 390.428. With this total population Edirne is ranked 48th province of Turkey amongst 81 provinces. 66,8% of its population resides in urban zones of the province, in the central district this ratio increases to 90,7%. The central district (the city of Edirne) has 141570 registered inhabitants in 2009 and 138793 in 2010 (Statistics Institution of Turkey, www.tuik.gov.tr). Given these demographic data, the city (and the province as well) would be considered to be medium-scaled. As for data regarding economic development degree, it would equally be considered as medium-scaled compared to Turkey's average. It is ranked 18th among 81 provinces in 1996, and 16th in 2003, in socio-economic development index prepared by the State Planning Organization. The city economy bases on agriculture, agriculture related small industry and service sector. Industrial production in the city is mostly based on agricultural goods.

Regarding the political composition of the city, local politics is marked with its current mayor serving office for his fourth period. It is the local elections held in 1989 that he was elected as mayor for the first time from SHP, with 42.68% majority of the votes. He has however been into the local politics prior to this. He has started his active municipal political life in 1984 when he was elected councilor. In 1994, he was elected one more time as mayor with 31.26% from CHP, followed by 19.57% of votes acquired by the DYP candidate. In 1999 he lost the election to the ANAP candidate with approximately 8 points of difference in vote percentages. I999 elections have a specific feature, since parliamentary and local elections were held at the same time. It was a victory for DSP in parliamentary elections. In Edirne, the DSP candidate got more votes than CHP - 29.66% and 22.43% successively- that were two mainstream social democrat or center-left parties in Turkey at the time. The defeat of CHP would be thus interpreted within the national political context of the country in that period. He (the current mayor) than slightly won the 2004 local elections with 31.97% of votes against the AK Parti candidate, which is the ruling party since 2002

parliamentary elections. Lastly, in 2009 the mayor consolidated its political power and leadership by getting 57.75% of votes against AK Parti candidate who got 31.75% of votes. These last elections were held under the second period of AK Parti's national government and AK Parti got an overwhelming success across the country (out of 2948 offices, AK Parti got 1489 and CHP got 520). Another important point regarding the 2009 elections is the fact that he won the office when he was found guilty of three cases regarding his operations at the office.

Given these election results and information, he would be presented as the "local political leader" of Edirne with a loyal group of "followers". The next section attempts to identify forms of capitals he possesses and his use of these capitals in enforcing his political position.

2.2. Forms of Capitals Mobilized to Strengthen Leadership

Forms of capitals possessed by Edirne's local leader would be analyzed and interpreted in three dimensions: cultural capital, social capital, and lastly the political capital accumulated by the transformation of two former ones. Firstly, the main source of his cultural capital is his degree of higher education. He had been graduated from the engineering faculty in 1976 as civil engineer and exercises his profession since. It is a profession that is closely linked to urban politics. It is important to note that in 1984 planning competence is delegated to municipalities with an amendment made in the relevant law, which corresponds to the date of his political life in municipality. Being a civil engineer constitutes a strong and easily convertible cultural capital to the economic one. It equally provides necessary networks of relationships (especially businessmen invested in construction) to build social capital.

Regarding the social capital, apart from its connection between the cultural capital he possesses, it manly bases on two elements: being local to Edirne and holding the control of party networks. The first element provides him excellent acquaintance of local people. Being "Edirne child" has immense symbolic meaning for the people of Edirne. Second element weights much more important in his accumulation of social capital. He has always been loyal to his political party. In 1989 he was elected from SHP, when CHP was banned from politics. After the reunion of SHP with CHP, he got his position along with the party leaders. Locally, he controls the central district organization, even if he has bad relationships with the provincial organization of the party. It is the central district organization of the party that is crucial to hold in order to gain and maintain political position as mayor. His close bureaucrats and other people working closely with him are mainly from the Party's central district organization, some of

them holding position at the Organization's administration. This control of the central district organization provides him the opportunity to dominate the selection process of council member candidates, which in turn presents him a full-domination on the municipal council and decision-making process.

Thirdly, his "political capital" is formed as a symbolic category of his cultural and social capitals. Apart from these two capitals, there is in fact another source of his political capital. This source would be explained as "being from the opposition party at national level". As Bourdieu discusses, the political field is organized in two opposite poles and one's position in this bipolar field is significant in his/her capital accumulation. As mentioned earlier, Turkey has a centralized government system, which does not give much autonomy to local governments and politicians. Their policies are much dependent on the central governments dispositions and financial transfers. In such system, their mayor is a "victim of national politics" in the eyes of residents of Edirne. Trials, financial deficits, and any other failure of the municipal policies are perceived as the outcomes of the central pressure. This provides the mayor symbolic capital strengthening his politic capital.

As for the type of the political capital he possesses, individual or personnel attributes are certainly important for a mayor who is serves office for more than 15 years. However, his political capital would equally be considered as "delegated", since party politics weights in his political career.

3. CONCLUSION

The study aims to analyze sources of a strong local political leadership, taking as basis the framework offered by main concepts of Bourdieu's sociology. The field research was conducted in Edirne where the current mayor is at office for more than 15 years, exercising a consolidated political leadership that enables him to dominate the political field. This domination is ensured by the political power exercised via "political capital" he possesses. His political capital stems from his cultural and social capitals. However, as the sociology of Bourdieu suggests, each field is an arena of constant struggle for domination. There are always social agents facing with each other in order to gain the domination of the field. This struggle is exercised by relevant resources they accumulate, which is conceptualized as "capital". Political field in Edirne is no different.

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