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My early education was founded upon two strategically decisive bases: Socialism, at political level (thanks to the influence of an uncle of mine who was a socialist of the old early twentieth-century type) and Catholicism (which saw me actively involved from an early age in pastoral work of an educational nature, including sport). Both domains made me particularly open-minded towards and interested in social issues, community life and respect for people. At university (where I enrolled in the Faculty of Literature and Philosophy) I discovered Sociology, thanks to the fascinating and persuasive teaching of Professor Franco Ferrarotti. I soon had no doubts: I would devote myself to that field of study.

Why did you decide to become a sociologist?

My degree thesis focused on the “religious” sociology of Italia. From then on, I began investigating the phenomenon of religion but I also realized that in order to find an adequate way of interpreting findings quantitative data alone were not sufficient and so I set out to develop a qualitative methodology (also with the help of computers) as well as a multi-method approach, believing that neither perspective (quantitative nor qualitative) could, on its own, provide an acceptable reading mode for the sociology of religion. I also went deeply into the history of religion and the relative documentation, working in a number of important archives (for example the Secret Vatican Archives and several Mexican archives, in particular those of Mexico City, Morelia and Uruapan). I also developed a growing interest in visual sociology as an investigational instrument to apply in this field of study.

In which area(s) of sociology are you most interested? Why?

As one of my principal aims was that of putting the best work carried out in the ambit of the sociology of religion on the international map, I wrote the *Manuale di sociologia della religione* (Manual of the sociology of religion) and more recently the *Nuovo manuale di sociologia della religione* (New manual of the sociology of religion) both in Italian and published by Borla, Rome. I also published translations of it in English (by Aldine de Gruyter, New York), in Spanish (now available in a new, improved edition, by Siglo XXI di Buenos Aires), Portuguese (by Paulus, Sao Paulo do Brasil), French (L’Harmattan, Paris) and Chinese (to date the only text of its kind in that language, by the Renmin University Press, Beijing). Another project carried out is a comparative international study involving three small “mountain communities” respectively in Italy (Orune, in Sardinia), Greece (Episkepsi, on the island of Corfù) and Mexico (Nahuatzen, in the State of Michoacán) which investigated the relations between community and solidarity. As far as productions of visual sociology are concerned I wish to mention, among others, the research films *Rossocontinuo* concerning the Red Christ of Cerignola, in the province of Foggia (Italy), and *Las fiestas de san Luís*, about the celebration of the patron saint of Nahuatzen in Mexico. Teaching is also a strong passion of mine, and my principal didactic aim is to make the theories and principle tools of sociology clear and intelligible.

Which of your professional activities (publications, research projects, teaching, etc.) are you proudest of? Why?

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